



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
*Where leaders learn*

**How the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity.**

**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree**

**Master of Business Administration**

**RHODES BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**By**

**Noxolo Patricia Mbokoma**

**(G15M9218)**

**Supervisor: Mr. Kevin Rafferty**

**September 2020**

**DECLARATION**

I, **Noxolo Patricia Mbokoma**, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for award of a degree.

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

## **ABSTRACT**

This study sought to investigate the experiences of leaders involved in a transition from specialist role to leadership role at the Eastern Cape Development Agency, South Africa. A qualitative case study within a constructivist paradigm was adopted. Bridges' (1991) theory of transition was used in this study to understand and analyse the process of transition in this study. The study used purposive sampling technique, where six leaders were selected and interviewed. The data was analysed through inductive and content analysis techniques. The findings are presented thematically and supported with participants verbatim. The study established that as specialists transition to leadership roles they experience lack of role clarity, stress (role strain), resistance, inadequate support, shock, increased work load (role strain) and role conflict. These experiences influence on their role identity, expertise, peer relationships and financial status. The study also established that for smooth and successful transition, consultation, participation, proper succession planning, and training is vitally important. This was necessary to ease the tension between management, leadership, specialist responsibilities, and resistance from specialists. The study recommends adequate support and preparation in all stages of transition to ensure that the organization benefits from the transition.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my supervisor Mr. Kevin Rafferty for his guidance and support throughout the duration of this research project. Thanks so much for being so patient with me and for your willingness to make me a better person. I deeply appreciate all your support financially, your wisdom, and your insightful mentorship style, which have made my journey much better. It has been an honour to be a part of your research group and I will never regret to have met you.

I would like to thank the Director of Rhodes Business School, Professor Owen Skae. He is a Professor that embraces the principle of transformation and service. He has transformed the University and has served and impacted countless of students' lives, especially mine.

Many thanks go to my reader Professor Jen Snowball for her guidance, and to my coaches and best proof-readers, Prof Jean-Pierre Kayembe, Ms. Vuyo Zozi and Mrs. Xoliswa Nakani Mapoma. You were all incredible. Thank you.

With all my heart I thank my amazing three beautiful daughters, Phiwokuhle, Lelethu and Sibahle, who are remarkable individuals who inspire me and want me to keep growing as a person and mother. I had to leave them at times to grow up so fast as responsible adults at very young age when I was pursuing my career.

I would like to thank my loving friends Nomsa Nabo Mbovani and Tumelo Tladi, they have been and are my spiritual friends, my shoulder to cry on, and my pillar of strength. They encouraged me to be my best when I was feeling at my worst. When I felt like giving up, they kept reminding me to fail forward in their own unique ways.

Thank you to my Mother who is the perfect example of supporting her children to excel who help mould and shaped my children. Not to mention my amazing late grandmother who continued to encourage me to do my very best. I also like to thank the friends of my daughters for ensuring that my daughters have extended siblings. I would like to thank the mothers of my friend's daughters for attending the meetings on my behalf and cheering my children up playing the motherly role in my absence. I would like to thank my husband Vusumzi Simon a man of integrity, honour and extraordinary wisdom. He showed me that my thoughts can be my dreams come true.

He agreed to look after our daughters; he has played an incredible role in our daughters as babies, toddlers and teenagers, showing support for my career choice.

I thank my spiritual Pastor, Mr. Simphiwe Nojoko and FABC (Faith Alive Bible Church) family at large who kept me in their prayers during my journey.

I thank Loughborough University staff especially my favourite Professor Mike Shane. I had an amazing time, amazing people, and all 49 of us. What an experience!

I am specially humbled by Management of ECDA (Eastern Cape Development Agency) and their Staff for agreeing to assist me with this Dissertation. The support they provided me throughout this Research was incredible. Thank you very much CEO and your Executive Assistant. You are Awesome, and you have an Amazing team!

Finally, I'd like to thank my creator, Jehovah God Almighty, and Jesus Christ, the way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, for mercies and grace, I say "BIG THANKS" for your love towards someone like me.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CEO	: Chief Executive Officer
FABC	: Faith Alive Bible Church
GE	: Government Entity
HOD	: Head of Department
SMME	: Small Medium and Micro Enterprise

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 2.1: Bridges Theory of Transition (1991) - Page 11

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3.1: A qualitative research process used in this study - Page 22

Table 4.1: Biographical Information of Participants – Page 33

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	i
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	ii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	iii
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	v
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	v
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	v
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	vi
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	1
<b>BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY</b> .....	1
<b>1.1 Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>1.2 Context of the research</b> .....	1
<b>1.3 Research Problem</b> .....	4
<b>1.4 Research Question</b> .....	5
<b>1.5 Aims and objectives</b> .....	5
<b>1.6 Research Rationale and Justification of the Study</b> .....	5
<b>1.7 Research Methodology</b> .....	6
<b>1.8 Outline of the Study</b> .....	7
<b>1.9 Conclusion</b> .....	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	8
<b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	8
<b>2.1 Introduction</b> .....	8
<b>2.2 Theoretical Framework</b> .....	8
<b>2.2.2. Bridges' Transition Theory</b> .....	9
<b>2.2.2.1. The Ending</b> .....	11
<b>2.2.2.2. Neutral Zone</b> .....	12
<b>2.2.2.3. New beginning</b> .....	12
<b>2.3 Role Clarity</b> .....	14
<b>2.4 Challenges Experienced by Leaders during Role Transition</b> .....	14
<b>2.4.1 Lack of support</b> .....	14
<b>2.4.2 Role tension</b> .....	15
<b>2.4.3 Increased Workload</b> .....	15
<b>2.4.4 Role shock</b> .....	15

2.4.5	Changes in relationships .....	16
2.4.6	Lack of management and leadership skills .....	16
2.4.7	Lack of role clarity and ambiguity .....	17
2.4.8	Role conflict .....	17
2.4.9	Resistance to change .....	18
2.7	Conclusion.....	19
<b>CHAPTER THREE.....</b>		<b>21</b>
<b>RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>		<b>21</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	21
3.2	Research Approach - Qualitative .....	21
3.3	Research Paradigm.....	22
3.5	Research Design .....	24
3.6.	Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques .....	25
3.7.	Methods and Instruments of Data Collection .....	26
3.8	Data Analysis.....	26
3.10	Ethical Consideration and Procedures .....	29
3.10.1	Informed consent .....	29
3.10.2	Principle of beneficence .....	29
3.10.3	Principle of non-maleficence .....	29
3.11	Conclusion .....	30
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>		<b>31</b>
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS .....</b>		<b>31</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	31
4.2	Demographic Information of the Participants .....	32
4.3	Changes Experienced by Leaders during the Transition Process .....	32
4.3.1	Change in responsibilities .....	32
4.3.2	Communication as an Ideal Component of Transition .....	33
4.4	Challenges Experienced in the Transition .....	34
4.5	Identity and Management of Old and New Realities of Leaders .....	35
4.6	Readiness in Taking New Positions .....	37
4.7	Work Load and Skills.....	38
4.8	Organizational Structure and Addressing the Needs of the Agency....	39
4.9	Leaders Experiences during and after the Transition .....	42
4.10	Strategies to ensure Successful Organizational Transition .....	43
4.11	Conclusion .....	44

<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>5.2 Transition as a process</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>5.3 The challenges experienced by leaders during the transition process</b> ...	<b>47</b>
<b>5.4 Identity – how Leaders let go of old realities and embrace new ones</b> .	<b>47</b>
<b>5.5 Support Needs during and after the transition</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>5.7 Conclusion</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>CHAPTER SIX</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>6.2 Conclusion based on Propositions</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>6.3 Limitations</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>6.4 Recommendations for the organization and Future Research</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>6.5 Conclusion</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>APPENDIXES</b> .....	<b>64</b>
<b>APPENDIX A FINAL ETHICS APPROVAL</b> .....	<b>64</b>
<b>APPENDIX B GATEKEEPER PERMISSION LETTER</b> .....	<b>65</b>
<b>APPENDIX C INSTITUTION CONSENT FORM</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>APPENDIX D INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE</b> .....	<b>67</b>

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to investigate how selected leaders experienced the transition from specialist role to leadership role at the Eastern Cape Development Agency, and how this shaped their leadership identity. The Agency used as a case study remains anonymous due to internal processes and ethical requirements.

Therefore, it shall be referred to as ECDA through the study. The ECDA is a national Agency with offices all around the Eastern Cape, South Africa, and it has been in existence since May 2012. Its vision is that of being a leading and vibrant organization that improves livelihoods and develops sustainable communities in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

The organization's aim is to drive, coordinate and facilitate implementation of integrated high impact programmes of development in the Eastern Cape by forming partnerships with disadvantaged communities, the private sector, other public sector organisations and departments with the main objective of building a vibrant and sustainable economy.

#### **1.2 Context of the research**

Bridges (1991) noted that change is situational whereas transition is psychological. He suggested that transition is a three-phase process, with an ending, a neutral zone, and a new beginning. The ending is characterized as letting go of old realities and readying oneself for a new situation. The neutral zone is the core of the transition, characterized by replacement of old behaviours with new. The neutral zone comes after the ending stage. According to Bridges (1991:5), the neutral zone is "no-man's land" due to the fact that it lies between the former role and the new role. Vrazel (2013) regards the neutral zone as a bridge spanning across the old role and the new role.

Plakhotnik and Rocco (2010) argue that it is at this stage that individuals are expected to depart from their normal way into a new way of doing things. The new beginning is

just that: a new beginning with new skills and a new outlook on the transition. In the new beginning phase, those individuals undergoing transition are prepared for their new roles having obtained the required skills and expertise (Vrazel, 2013). This is the stage where one can see if the leaders are ready for the new role or not. The new beginning phase is characterized by new identities, attitudes, values and understandings. Bridges (1991) also suggested that individuals need to go through all of the phases to make a successful transition. Given that organizational change is inevitable (Kreiter & Kinicki, 2001); this study investigated the experiences of specialists as they transitioned into leadership roles in an Agency in the Eastern Cape and how it impacted their identity.

This agency is tasked with economic development in the Eastern Cape Province. According to Potts (2016), transition is a great time to shed behaviours, it is also through transition that old behaviours are shed that can hold a leader back. Leaders are encouraged to embrace efficient and effective behaviours that will assist them in carrying out their roles. Potts (2016) further informs us that a new role could typically mean irregular hours and test in the work/life balance due to additional stress. Transition occurs when individuals within an organization move from one job or rank to another (Jaca, 2018).

It involved adapting to a new situation and integrating changes into the lives of those going through change (Kralik, Visentin & Van Loon, 2006). Adapting to the new demands of leadership is challenging when an employee is used to being a specialist. According to Gentry, Logan and Tonidandel (2014), failure to equip the individuals involved in the transition process with the necessary leadership skills makes transition difficult and challenging. Gentry, Logan and Tonidandel (2014) assert that there is difficulty in asserting authority if an individual assumes a leadership role after being an ordinary employee. The failure to assert authority and power when an individual is promoted to a leadership position can pose as a challenge when transition has occurred.

Transition implies added functions and responsibilities such as people management, performance management, influencing and motivating others. Whilst transition from specialists to leadership roles can be exciting, it has proven to be equally stressful for the incumbents (Jaca, 2018). The main source of stress in transition stems from

various and distinct leadership competencies required post transition in the organization (Jaca, 2018). Entering the new role is therefore the beginning and not the end goal. Ideally, leaders should be trained thoroughly in terms of the skills required in their preparation to transition to a new role after being appointed (Jaca, 2018).

Day (2000) mentions that a leadership development approach is oriented towards building organizational capacity to proactively perform the basic leadership tasks to collectively set direction, create alignment and maintain commitment and motivation. Leadership is defined differently in different societies (Holtzhausen, 2014), making it a somewhat elusive concept (Smit, Cronje, Brevis & Vrba, 2013) that is not an easy task to define (de Beer, 2017; Holtzhausen, 2014; Smit et al., 2013). For de Beer (2017), the activities creating a bridge between objectives being achieved and planning in the enterprise for the organization are referred to as leadership. Nieuwenhuizen (2019) defines effective leadership as the utilization of personal attributes in combination with power relations as an instrument to formulate exciting visions, implement strategies and bring about change in a successful manner to attain results to the benefit of all the stakeholders.

Stryker and Burke (2000:289) imply a duality: "role is external; it is linked to social positions within the social structure whereas identity is internal, consisting of internalized meanings and expectations associated with a role." Ashforth (2001) maintains that each role carries with it an identity that contains specific values, goals, beliefs, norms, interaction styles, and time horizons. As specialists they are sure of what they are doing whereas as leaders there is a level of uncertainty, they have a duty to their subordinates and must be part of strategy in the organization.

Ashforth's (2001) model incorporates the motives of becoming situated in a role: identity (who I am in the organization), belonging (who I am with others), and meaning (what and why I am), and control (how I am). Stryker and Burke (2000) argue that: how we act has a great deal with who we think we are and how we see ourselves. McCall & Simmons (as cited in Farmer, Kung-McIntyre & Tierney, 2003) argue that a role identity is a self-view, or a meaning attributed to oneself in relation to a specific role, that which is generated reflexively through perceived appearance to self or others, self-judgment of that appearance, and affect based on that judgment. Farmer, Kung-McIntyre and Tierney, (2003) state that a role identity reflects an internalized set

of role expectations, with the importance of the identity being a function of commitment to the relevant role.

Chang et al. (2005) maintain that when people experience role stress during transition, they need support in the form of stress education and being taught management strategies. As specialists, transition to leadership roles they might experience lack of role clarity, stress (role strain), resistance, inadequate support, shock, increased work load (role strain) and role conflict. The influence on their role identity could be new expertise, changes in relationships and change in financial status. The transition in the current study shall be that of specialists who were promoted to leadership positions in an Agency.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

Learning how to deal with, prepare, and plan for transition in advance has become a vital part of organizations' strategy plans. Aitken and Higgs (2012) suggests that much of the dysfunctional behaviour seen in working environments during change are caused by change leaders in relation to not practicing what they advise and/or personal values that conflicts between managers, employees, suppliers, customers and stakeholders. Thus, change leaders need to recognize the necessity for being consistent during the change process. According to Kotter (2012:28), "leadership defines what the future look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen, despite the obstacles".

The researcher of this study suggests that the challenges experienced by leaders could, partly, be related to issues in transitioning to a leadership role. A lack of knowledge of the transitional experiences of leaders may possibly lead to a continuous lack of clear understanding of what newly appointed leaders could and should do to ensure that a successful transition takes place. Knowledge about what happens during the leaders' transition process may also assist in terms of identifying the support leaders need at different stages of their transition. Some of the literature indicate that during the transition period leaders experience changes that are both personal, such as financial benefits and status, work-related which involve changes in their responsibilities and their relationships with former peers (Jaca, 2018).

The challenges experienced during transition include the lack of role clarity; a lack of subject knowledge, management and leadership skills; heavy workloads, time constraints; tension between management, leadership and specialist responsibilities; a resistance from specialists; and inadequate support. Hence, the emphasis of the study, there are several key questions that have to be raised, and these will be further elaborated in the following section.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

Based on the problem area just discussed, the following research question, which will serve as the basis for this thesis have been formulated:

“How the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity”.

#### **1.5 Aims and objectives**

The aim of this study is to examine how the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity. Specifically, this study seeks to achieve the following sub-goals which are:

1. To establish the changes and identify challenges experienced by leaders during the transition process from a specialist role to a leadership role;
2. To describe leaders readiness and how they adapt to change during the transition process.
3. To identify the support needs of leaders during the transition process;
4. To describe how the leaders define themselves in the new role and its identity and formulate recommendations on how to support them during the transition process;

#### **1.6 Research Rationale and Justification of the Study**

This study sought to investigate the experiences of leaders' transition from specialist to leadership roles at the Eastern Cape Development Agency, South Africa. A

qualitative case study within a constructivist paradigm was adopted and Bridges' (1991) theory of transition is used in this study to explain or interpret the transition processes in the case study. Transitions within organisations are characterized with changes and challenges, and thus, it is important to investigate the leaders' experiences of such changes. The current study seeks to understand how organisations handle the transition process, how do leaders experience the transition and what changes they encountered.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

A phenomenological paradigm will be adopted, considering that the research is qualitative in nature (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research paradigms, also known as constructivist/social constructivist, interpretive (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2018), naturalistic, post-positive or post-modern perspective (Li, Liping, Elias & Theron, 2018), are based on describing a phenomenon in a holistic, contextually and deep comprehensive manner. The senior management unit at the Agency will serve as a sub-case of study. Denscombe (2014:31) believes that focusing on what requires investigation is indeed the defining characteristic of the case study approach and its focus point.

The aim of this study is to examine how the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity. A nonprobability (Neuman, 2014:278) purposive sampling technique (Cant, 2015:81; Lumadi, 2015:235; Struwig & Stead, 2015:116) was used to select a group (Brynard, Hanekom & Brynard, 2018).

The Researcher followed the Human Ethics guidelines and requirements to conduct the study. Through the principle of non-maleficence, the researcher did not harm the participants (Elias & Theron, 2018; Lune & Berg, 2017) and participants were assured of their confidentiality (Dane, 2018; Delvin, 2018; Salkind, 2019; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The participants were given a choice to withdraw from the research at any time and remain anonymous, as the researcher was sensitive to the participants' possible fears.

## **1.8 Outline of the Study**

Chapter 1 focuses on introducing the topic and research question, the background, proposition and justification of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review on role transition theory and role identity.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology chosen for the study. Key methodological components such as research design, research approach, paradigm, methods and tools of data collections, analysis and ethical consideration are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 focuses on data presentation, interpretation and analysis of findings.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the research.

Chapter 6 focuses on recommendations on how leaders can benefit from organizational changes made. Lastly, the limitations identified during the research are highlighted and future areas of research are suggested.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the background and contextualization of the study has been done, where the principles of transition in organization have been briefly discussed. Informed by objectives, literature and theoretical framework. The methodological processes has been mentioned as used in the study. Finally, the structure of the dissertation has been outlined, providing an overview of the final report outlook.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the literature on role transition, role identity, role clarity, identity leadership are reviewed. Bridges' Transition Theory of Ending, Neutral Zone and New Beginning stages is discussed. The Chapter concludes with a discussion on the challenges experienced by Leaders during transition.

#### 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes the Bridges' (1991) Transition Theory, and the following section provides a discussion on how the theory is relevant and applicable to this current study. Comparison is made between the specialists and the leadership roles. The key takeaways are that the specialists do specialized jobs, they are hands on whilst the leaders provide oversight.

##### 2.2.1 Specialist versus Leadership roles

Leadership is a journey in search of oneself and a journey in which one helps others search for their essence and possibilities (Manning, 2002: 25). Zaccaro (2001) observed that managers at all levels must carry out the indirect leadership activities of direction setting and implementation as well as the direct leadership roles involved in interpersonal influence. He also suggested that the specifics of those roles vary with organizational level.

Leaders must ensure their cultures have the right values and vision. Healthy cultures are based on 3 E's. Encouragement, enterprise and excellence (Pegg, 1994:18). Leadership, however, entails the creation of a common vision within the organization (Weatherby, 1999). Tschohl (2014) asserts that Leadership is the term given to the process in which one person, the leader, inspires to engage in achieving a certain task. A leader is someone who motivates, guides, is adaptable, is innovative and original, makes and pursues opportunities, is able to build strong interpersonal relations, improves others, gives credit where it is due, defies the status quo, and does the right thing not just does things right (Tschohl, 2014).

Leaders aim to generate inspiration to meet their objectives, to achieve long-term goals, to take chances to achieve shared goals, and to contest the current system (Bennis and Nanus, 1997). The leader has an inquiring eye on the benefits of his followers, so individuals willingly obey the leader, and by using a transformational style, the leader guides the follower (Bass, 1990).

Katz (1955) and Mann (1965) suggested that at all levels Managers utilize every one of the three skill types, which are technical, interpersonal and conceptual skills. They additionally contended that the relative importance of each skill domain differs with every organizational level, proposing that different skills are primary at each level. In particular, technical skills were viewed as generally significant for Specialists, for Managers interpersonal skills and Executives conceptual skills.

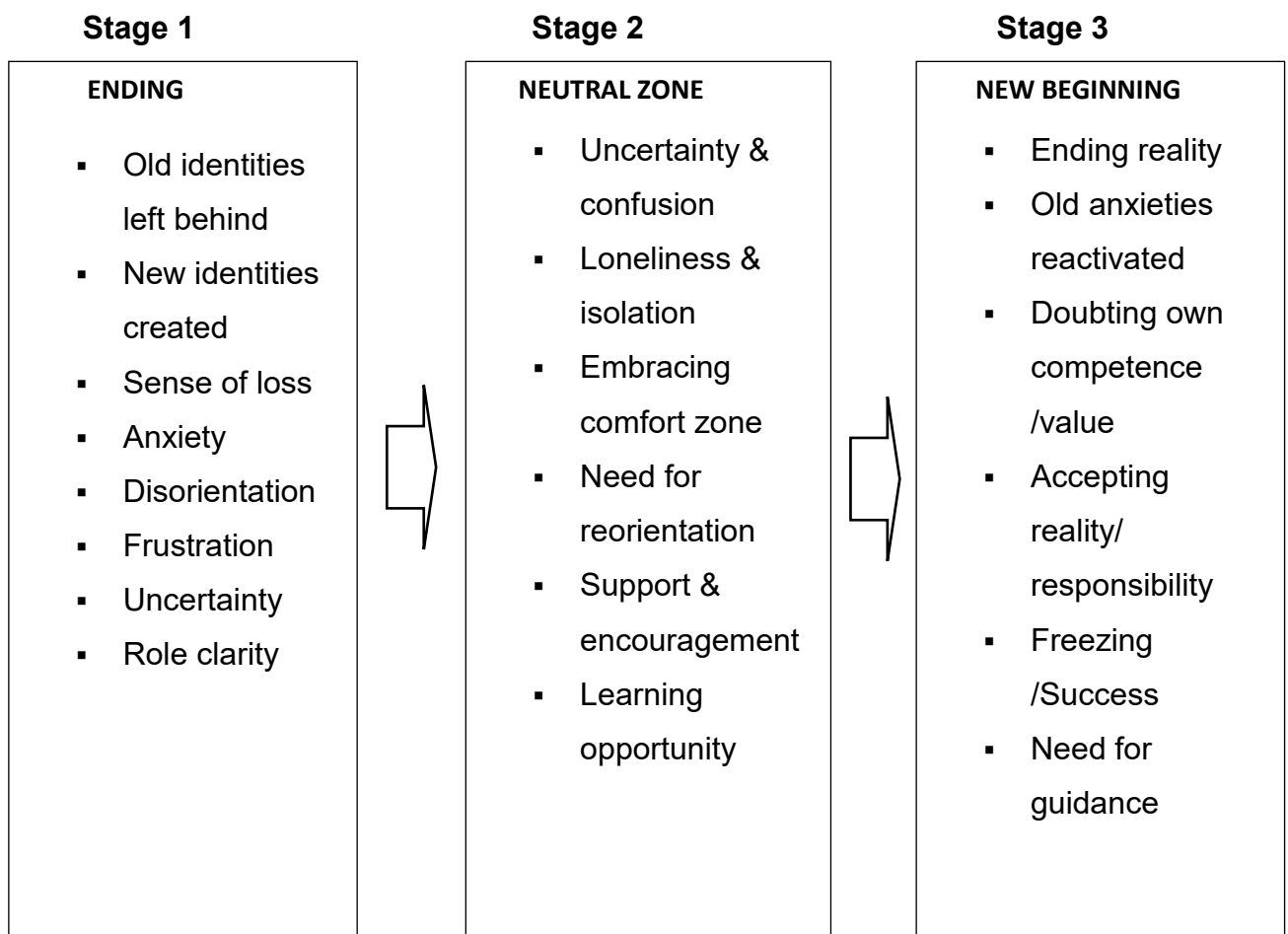
The skills typology recommended by Mann (1965) and proposed by Katz (1955) suggest a system that characterizes the management skills into three categories: Conceptual abilities—capability with thoughts, scientific and legitimate reasoning, deductive and inductive thinking, frameworks thinking, and intellectually speaking to complex data and controlling it to shape integrative ideas and envision the results of elective strategies; human or relational abilities—fitness with individuals as exhibited in correspondence, shaping and looking after connections, and demonstrating worry for the sentiments and wants of others; and specialized aptitudes—incorporating capability with things, for example, specific strategies, cycles, information, and procedures.

Katz and Kahn, 1978 are consistent with these activities at each Management level: Technical skills are needed for Specialists to tackle normal or foreseen issues underway; interpersonal skills for coordination, emotional roles and communication are critical at Management level, and in order to integrate external opportunities with internal capabilities conceptual skills are needed at an Executive level in an effort to strategically position the organization in a competitive environment and create a vision.

### **2.2.2. Bridges' Transition Theory**

The researcher utilizes the Bridges' (1991) Transition Theory as a basis for viewing

and obtaining meaning of the gathered data. The transition theory differentiates between change and transition. As the theory purports, change is interchangeable with transition; however, the two concepts are different. The suggestion by Bridges' theory is that whilst transition is intrinsic and takes time; change is external and fast. In terms of this specific study, the appointment of a specialist into a leadership position is change, due to the immediate change in rank and status; it is a change that signifies the commencement of transition. The argument put forward by Bridges (1991) is that change goes along with transition; it is necessary that an individual accepts the change of role to experience transition. According to Bridges' (1991) theory, transition consists of three progressive stages. The three stages are the ending, neutral zone and new beginning. The following figure illustrate Bridges' Transition Theory, where the three stages of transition are presented and what takes place in each of them.



**Figure 2.1: Bridges Theory of Transition (1991)**

### **2.2.2.1. The Ending**

According to Bridges' (1991) theory the first step in a transition process is an ending. Ending involves individuals leaving and parting away from their old identities as professionals and begin embracing new professional identities. It is at this stage that individuals are expected to depart from their normal manner of doing things to new manners of doing things. As a consequence, the ending stage involves the development of a new mind-set whilst accepting change from the normal position. According to Bridges' (1991) theory, the ending stage has to do with emotions, such as depression, disorientation and anxiety. In support of this theory, Vrazel (2013) emphasizes that the ending phase is characterized by emotions, such as resistance and confusion due to the refusal by transitioning people to part away from their established routines.

Therefore, for new leaders to develop new professional images they ought to move away from their specialist identity and begin assuming the leadership way of thinking and behaving to improve their organizations (Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2010). The transition theory advocates that new leaders should accept their leadership role including taking charge of their subordinates and recognizing the supremacy of their role over their subordinates (Jaca, 2018). The Bridges' (1991) theory advocates that during the ending stage, clarification of new roles should be done and it should be ensured that the individuals going through transition comprehend all the details about their new leadership roles.

Vrazel (2013) suggests that at the ending stage senior leaders within the organization should comprehend the emotions of those individuals going through transition and should allow them to part with their old way of doing things and thinking. Fundamentally, it is at this stage that senior leadership utilize their listening and communication skills in educating those individuals undergoing transition about the benefits of successful transition; assuring them support and providing them with expertise and necessary skills. This theory gives a broader view of whether the organization adequately prepares new leaders for their new roles.

Getting rid of former roles and perceptions prepares the transitioning individuals to progress to the next stage of the transition process, the neutral zone.

#### **2.2.2.2. Neutral Zone**

The neutral zone comes after the ending stage. According to Bridges (1991, p5), the neutral zone is “no- man’s land” due to the fact that it lies between the former role and the new role. Vrazel (2013) regards the neutral zone as a bridge spanning across the old role and the new role. Generally, the neutral zone lies in the middle of the old image and the new image of those undergoing transition. Within the neutral zone those people involved in the transition process have forsaken their old beings but have not fully settled and relaxed in their new positions; they still have a sense of loneliness and isolation. The process of appointing leadership is quick and change is fast; nonetheless, it takes time to transition due to the prolonged struggle within the neutral zone (Bridges, 1999).

Ambiguity and confusion prolong the time taken in the neutral zone. Vrazel (2013) maintains that in the neutral zone there is an increase of the workload on those transitioning individuals as they adapt to new systems and procedures. The new leaders should be provided with feedback, encouragement, support and re-orientation for them to professionally develop and explore their new positions (Vrazel, 2013). According to Bridges (1991), a new beginning will only be embraced if an ending has been done and adequate time has been spent in the neutral zone. Failure to attend to the ending stage and failure to acknowledge the neutral zone, results in a struggle to accept role change (Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2010). Bridges’ (1991) theory is useful in the identification of what organizations ought to do to ensure that new leaders learn and grasp their positions.

#### **2.2.2.3. New beginning**

The new beginning is the last stage in the process of transition. It is postulated by Bridges’ (1991) theory that the final transition stage is the new beginning. This stage occurs when individuals have passed through the ending and neutral zone phases and are ready to be emotionally committed to do things in a new manner. In the new beginning phase, those individuals undergoing transition are prepared for their new roles having obtained the required skills and expertise (Vrazel, 2013). The new beginning phase is characterized by new identities, attitudes, values and understandings. The Bridges’ (1991) theory suggests that a new beginning is scary to people.

Despite spending a prolonged timespan in the neutral zone, people still fear new beginning due to the new commitments, new roles and new demands expected. There is reactivation of old worries triggered by the first stage of transition and in addition the new beginning signals the reality of the ending. There is need of nurturing new beginnings because the self-esteem of transitioning individuals could be destroyed by old memories of unsuccessfulness. Histories of past failures and their associated punishments may be triggered by new beginnings. When individuals move away from the neutral zone, they may feel losing the "pleasant experience of the neutral zone" (Jaca, 2018:21).

The slower pace and ambiguity of the neutral zone may be pleasant to some individuals even though the overall experience in this phase might be undesirable. "They use the confusion to cover and hide their lack of interest in doing the task and the absence of role clarity gives them an excuse for their inactivity" (Jaca, 2018:21). To individuals utilizing such a tactic, the new beginning denotes an end to lack of accountability and pressure. The Bridges' (1991) theory recommends that senior organizational leaders ought to give an explanation of the objective of a new self-image and portray how new leaders are expected to conduct themselves; they ought to make a clarification of how to achieve new identity and give an explanation of what new leaders should do to attain it. Vrazel (2013) emphasizes how crucial transitioning individuals should be continuously supported during transition since failure to do that may hinder the success of transition. The following section provides a discussion of the literature that was reviewed to give a context to this study.

Bridges (1991) developed 'managing the transition' to make a distinction between planned change and transition. Bridges model has some similarities with Lewin's force field model, in their explanation of a change process. Bridges argues that transitions are highly complex, and therefore requires a deeper understanding of what goes on during transition and how can we manage the process more effectively (Cameron & Green, 2012). "Transition is about letting go of the past and taking up new behaviours or ways of thinking" (Heradstveit, 2015). Transition consists of three phases: ending; neutral zone and new beginning.

In the neutral zone, people feel disoriented, motivation falls and anxiety rises. The manager's job is to ensure that people recognize the neutral zone and treats it as part

of the process (Cameron & Green, 2012). Further, Bridges (1991) argues that new beginnings need to be developed carefully, and one should encourage, support and reinforce in order for the change to be successful. If leaders are to motivate and engage employees during times of transition, it is highly important for them to actually understand the degree of severity, as well as what the transition actually means. Thereby, it is essential for leaders to understand the transition in order to actually encourage and reinforce it in the company.

### **2.3 Role Clarity**

Markus and Wurf (as cited in Farmer, Kung-McIntyre and Tierney, 2003) state that role identities motivate role performances because enactment of relevant roles fulfils a critical need for self-verification. Role clarity has been depicted as the level to which workers' jobs are obviously imparted and perceived by them (Biddle, 1986:73). McEnrue (as cited in Bray 1998) found that apparent fitness to perform fundamental occupation errands was empathically reiterated to job role clarity.

### **2.4 Challenges Experienced by Leaders during Role Transition**

Various studies have revealed the presence of challenges to those involved in transition during the transition process (Bennett, Newton, Wise, Woods & Economou, 2003; Ali and Botha, 2006; Zepeda, 2007; Jaca, 2018). These challenges include: lack of support; role tension; increased workload; role shock; changes in relationships; lack of leadership and management skills, lack of clarity and ambiguity, role conflict and resistance to change. These challenges are discussed below.

#### **2.4.1 Lack of support**

If novice leaders are not prepared for the new leadership position through training and provision of necessary and adequate support; they have a high propensity of failing to cope with the process of transition (Jaca, 2018). A study conducted in South Africa by Ali and Botha (2006) focused on examining the role played by school leaders (HoDs) in improving secondary schools. It was discovered that school leaders (HoDs) had the perception that they failed to obtain support from their superiors, which delays the transition.

### **2.4.2 Role tension**

According to Jaca (2018:46), “previous studies on transition have indicated that when people go through transition to a new role, especially a management one, they experience tension that includes role conflict”. Role tension refers to a circumstance where a person is expected to execute two or more roles in a manner that complying with one role makes it complex to comply with the other role (Zepeda, 2007). Consequently, the perception is that role conflict is pressure to execute in different incompatible ways. The literature review by Bennet *et al.* (2003) about the transitioning position of school leaders revealed that leaders encountered role conflict between being specialists and being leaders. In that conflict, they ended up being loyal to other specialists than being loyal to leadership.

### **2.4.3 Increased Workload**

It has been noticed that sometimes when employees transition into leaders they are expected to continue executing some of their current roles whilst executing new leadership roles. This implies dual roles. Zhou *et al.* (2014) identified two causes of overload, namely overload caused by a lot of work to do and inconsistency in time. Adnan and Saud (2016:45) highlighted several causes of role overload, namely (1) when an employee has insufficient skill to perform the task; (2) when an employee is unable to complete an assigned task or target in the given time period; (3) when an employee is assigned many responsibilities or several roles/tasks at the same time with a short deadline; (4) when employees have high expectations of themselves; and (5) when there is no motivation by the senior managers to enact the role. Barnett *et al.* (2003) conducted a study in the United States of America, that focused on examining the work realities of assistant principals and propose that assistant principals (as school leaders) view their positions as overwhelming, which is a cause of frustration. The findings revealed the lack of preparedness to face the reality of their new position upon appointment.

### **2.4.4 Role shock**

One of the challenges encountered during role transition process is that of role shock due to misconceptions about a position. According to Duchscher (2009), most individuals who encounter role transition react by having anxiety due to the uncertainty

of shifting from a familiar job scenario to an unfamiliar environment associated with the new role. Individuals move to new positions with a perception that they understand the new roles only to realize that the new roles are demanding and complex. Hill (2007) carried out a business-related study that had a focus on individual role transition to a leadership role, managers unveiled that individuals who transition to new roles become aware of the implications of the newly assumed role when they face the actual job expectations and demands.

It was revealed by the same study that managers encountered shock upon discovering that there was a difference between the techniques and skills of the previous role and new role. The new managers found out that the new position required new expertise that they lacked. The new leaders in the study by Hill (2007) thought they would acquire authority to make things happen from the new position; however, it was not always true. Furthermore, they had the preconceived view that the new leadership position would give them power, but they discovered that their power relied heavily upon establishing credibility with workmates.

#### **2.4.5 Changes in relationships**

According to Jaca (2018), a common challenge during transition seems to be changes in relationships. The new leader ought to maintain a leader-subordinate relationship rather than a peer-to-peer relationship. The specialists who become leaders but continue to perform duties of specialists often find it stressful to adjust their minds when facing such a situation (Jaca, 2018).

#### **2.4.6 Lack of management and leadership skills**

Assuming a new role is exciting, can be difficult and complex especially when it requires leadership expertise (Weidling & Dimmock, 2006). Novice leaders sometimes face the predicament of getting excitement from the new leadership role, but the lack of leadership expertise required is often stressful. According to Murphy (2011), for effective performance, novice leaders should be adequately trained for the new role. Sirkis (2011) and Nguyen (2012) also advocate for thorough training and preparation of new leaders regarding leadership and management roles, responsibilities and duties. Ellis, Vriesendorp and Galer (2005) caution that when leaders are not thoroughly prepared for their new leadership roles, they re-embrace their previous

roles due to their unpreparedness for the new leadership position; this might be a hindrance to the process of transition.

#### **2.4.7 Lack of role clarity and ambiguity**

According to Jaca (2018:44), “the lack of role clarity has been identified as the absence of information required to do a job effectively”. Mayer and Zepeda (2002) consider lack of role clarity as the insufficiency of information that causes the worker to have a vague perception of the position. Sinha and Subramanian (2012) refer to role ambiguity as the degree of uncertainty perceived in accomplishing role requirements or the absence of predictability about the result of role behaviour.

There is a relationship between a role clarity and role ambiguity that emanates from the absence of fundamental information about a specific role (Mayer & Zepeda, 2002). Paese and Michelle (2006) stress that individual’s encounter ambiguity if their expectations are not made clear when transition occurs; this hinders the success of the transition.

Beard (1999) observed that role ambiguity could be a reason for many negative or detrimental consequences for the individual and also the organization, including job dissatisfaction, stress, and propensity to leave the organization. Role ambiguity is the extent of lack of clear information linked to a role and uncertainty of the result of an individual’s role performance (Beard, 1999). Hsieh and Hsieh (2003) opine that role ambiguity could be due to insufficient information regarding an employee’s role or lack of understanding of what is expected of him. This definition agrees with Idris (2011) view who defines role ambiguity as when an individual lack clear authority or knowledge on how to perform their assigned roles. Schulz and Auld (2006) agree that role ambiguity is because of unclear distribution of power, hierarchy, duties or individual’s activities. Yongkang *et al.* (2014) defined role ambiguity as the degree of vagueness of role expectations, means of fulfilling the role expectations and the penalty of role performance.

#### **2.4.8 Role conflict**

The role-conflict assumption suggests that, when the role contradict those associated with another of their work roles, and even when expectations embedded in one of their work roles differ, an employee will experience stress and dissatisfaction (Bedeian &

Armenakis, 1981; Miles & Perreault, 1976). Noor (2004) in particular indicates that role-conflict in the workplace can occur under three conditions, the first is where the time needed to fulfil one role leaves insufficient time to devote to other roles; the second is where stress from fulfilling one role makes it difficult to meet the requirements of fulfilling another; the third is where specific behaviours associated with one role make it difficult to meet the requirements of another.

#### **2.4.9 Resistance to change**

When dealing with transformations, leaders should encourage, follow-up and lead their employees during the changes, regardless of what they agree with. Higgs and Aitken (2012) outline a framework for key factors determining reactions to changes. Mainly, they express concern for the feeling of ambiguity that might occur during changes, which can trigger negative reactions. However, resistance to change is normal within organizations, and may occur for several reasons that are not mutually exclusive (Connor, 1995; Fedor, Caldwell & Herold, 2006; Yukl, 2013).

#### **2.5 Role Identity**

Stets and Burke (2000) stated that in identity theory, the core of an identity is the self-categorization as a role occupant, and the self-incorporation of the expectations and meanings associated with the performance in that role. In the case of this study participants were able to perform multiple roles, and this contributed a great deal to the organization. Caldwell (2003) states that lack of role clarity can hinder the success of the organisation. Ashforth (2001) maintains that an identity carries specific goals, norms, values, time horizons and interaction styles. These role identities measure socially designed meanings of self-in-job articulates, Ashforth et al., (2000) and represents a persona that one might authorize as stated in Ashforth, (2001).

McCall & Simmons (1978) describe role identity as the position humans play when holding precise social positions in agencies, it's relational since humans engage with each other through their personal function identities. The idea of role transition first features how people move between different jobs in transition sequences, and secondly clarifies how this development impacts their feeling of self. Researchers make the differentiation between inter role and intra role transitions: inter role

transitions happen when an individual moves from one job to the next (Javerntie-Thesleff & Tienari 2016), and intra role transitions happen when an already held role has changes in orientation.

## **2.6 Leadership Identity**

DeRue and Ashford (2010) proposed that leadership identity development occurs at individual, relational, and collective levels. Identity is discovered and proclaimed as part of social interaction at self-concept level, thus generating new thoughts and opinions regarding one's leadership characteristics (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Tubin, 2017). Relational leadership identity is established between individuals and recognized relationally through adoption of role identities (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Although DeRue & Ashford found this level of relations usually developing from role identities as leader and follower, we discovered similar scenario at ECDA.

Day (2001) argues that “the primary focus of leadership development is on developing and using interpersonal skills” (p. 585). Murphy and Johnson (2011) highlighted the self-reinforcement process inherent in leadership experiences. Sluss & Ashforth (2007) identified three interactional themes that promoted the development of leadership identity: (a) influence, motivation, and leadership support; (b) leadership skills; and (c) validation of experiences. At the individual level, a leadership identity is internalized, acknowledged in role relationships between individuals, and collectively embraced in a broader organizational context.

Developing collective leadership identity results from being a part of a broader social group where a person's leadership identity has been endorsed by the community (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Identity can also be applied to the leadership process and how one adopts a leadership identity, informed by two key developmental theory families: psycho-social and cognitive. Both psychosocial and cognitive developmental stages have elements compatible to developmental processes that are required to create leadership identity.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

The chapter provided a review of current literature regarding the transition of leaders from specialist role to a leadership role in a bid to discover the different perspectives of researchers concerning role transition. The theoretical framework that underpins

this study (Bridges' (1991) theory of transition) has been discussed. The available literature has shown the transition dynamics in different aspects of leadership. From the literature review and the theories, this study is grounded in literature framework within the following key concepts: role identity, transition process, leadership support, role and skills conflict, change management, career development and personal growth, and organisational transition challenges. Importantly, these concepts have been used to formulate propositions presented in chapter three, which aid in the analysis of data in this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology used in the current study. The aim of this study is to examine how the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity. To achieve this aim, the following components of research are considered and discussed in this chapter: research approach, research paradigm, population and sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, data analysis and ethical procedures.

#### 3.2 Research Approach - Qualitative

Academic disciplines often conventionally follow a set of traditional steps while executing a research project (Matshabaphala, 2017). There are three types of research approaches, namely qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Riccucci, 2010:97; Van Wyk & Taole, 2015). This being a phenomenological study, utilises a qualitative research approach and it followed a research process proposed by de Vos, *et al* (2018), as seen in Table 3.3 below:

**Table 3.1:** A qualitative research process used in this study

<b>PHASE 1: SELECTION OF A RESEARCHABLE TOPIC</b>
1. Identify a researchable topic
<b>PHASE 2: FORMAL FORMULATIONS</b>
2. Asses suitability of the research approach
3. Formulate the problem/questions/hypothesis/goal/objective
4. Draft the research proposal
5. Consider the ethical implications of the study
<b>PHASE 3: PLANNING</b>
6. Select a paradigm and consider a place of a literature review
7. Select a research design or strategy
8. Select methods of information collection and analysis

9. Frame and develop sample
<b>PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION</b>
10. Consider the applicability of the elements of a pilot study
11. Consider entry and access in implementing the design, collect materials, record and undertake literature study (Where applicable)
<b>PHASE 5: DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION</b>
12. Process and analyse data and verify results. Select additional criteria for judging adequacy
13. Plan narratives and write the report

**Source:** De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2018)

The researcher chose a qualitative research approach over quantitative and mixed methods approaches because of the following reasons:

- (i) This study was geared towards getting qualitative insights from participants in the agency.
- (ii) A qualitative study requires a small number of participants (Gray, 2018) and is not aimed at generalisation.
- (iii) Accordingly, a qualitative research is based on subjective relationships (Gaudet & Robert, 2018; Wild & Diggins, 2015).
- (iv) It uncovers the significance and seriousness of human behaviour, it looks at the deep meaning of actions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) to understand the experiences of those involved (Chase, 2018; Dane, 2018, Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2015) and relies primarily on different methods of collecting information.

Qualitative research is defined differently by several researchers (e.g. Creswell & Poth, 2018; Dörnyei, 2007; Li, Lipping & Khan, 2018). Creswell (2009) refers to qualitative research as a methodology in which researchers explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to a social problem.

### **3.3 Research Paradigm**

An interpretivist research paradigm was used in this study as explained below. Qualitative research paradigms, also known as constructivist/social constructivist, interpretive (Bless *et al.*, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2015; De Vos *et al.*, 2018), naturalistic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2018) and post-positive or post-modern perspective (Li *et al.*, 2018). These are based on describing

a phenomenon in a, holistic, contextually and deep comprehensive manner (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2018) is the general label applied to a collection of methods used to obtain information about lived experiences. Lived experiences refer to trying to understand events from the viewpoints of people who were part of the events and to understand their experiences, instead of imposing another persons' viewpoint (Nardi, 2018).

The goal is to understand the viewpoint of those involved, as opposed to a quantitative method in which predetermined categories and a more structured scientific approach are involved (Dane, 2018). Given the above, the researcher in this study used an interpretivist research paradigm to understand the leader's experiences in the transition period, by grasping the subjective meaning of that social action (Bryman *et al.*, 2014). The interpretivist paradigm is typically seen as an approach to qualitative research and the goal of the researcher is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2014; Delpont *et al.*, 2018).

The researcher's intention, in this paradigm, is to interpret the meanings others have about the world to generate or to inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2014; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Saunders *et al.* (2016) inform us that the purpose of interpretivist research is to create new, richer understanding and interpretations of social words and context. Thus, interpretivists often address the process of interaction among individuals and focus on specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the settings of the participants (Creswell, 2014; Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

### **3.4 Research Proposition**

A research proposition is commonly interpreted as a suggestion about the ideas that can be evaluated as true or false in a sense of scientific study (Johnson, 2020). Study propositions are often appropriate for use in experimental exploratory research, as they do not require statistical or analytical testing experiments as in the case of hypotheses. Hence, this study being qualitative in nature, the use of research proposition facilitates the aim of understanding leaders' perspectives that had gone through a transition of personnel roles. The transition offered a starting point for a shift

in corporate culture that was motivated by leaders' conversion role from specialist to leadership positions.

Progress or failure is a good indicator of an organization's overall need to implement a transition. Organizational transitions require a great deal of effort from members, and it may require longer than expected for the duration of complete transit. Therefore, promoting transition processes is imperative for a variety of reasons such as: (i) minimizing the probability of derailment; (ii) speeding up success time; (iii) maintaining talent; (iv) speeding up organizational change; and (v) reducing risk to the business or organization is significantly relevant for organizations.

The key propositions depend on the transition process and the individual leaders who are witnessing the transition from the specialist role to the leadership role within the South African development agency. Investigating these elements, the researcher shall assess the importance that the transformation adds to the organization, as well as the members. In investigating the history and roles of the leaders in the organization, the researcher tries to get a better understanding of what their responsibilities are at present, and how and why these responsibilities have evolved over time. Therefore, the researcher is attempting to develop the organizational leaders' perceptions in terms of the principles and frameworks built up in the chapter 2 analysis of academic literature.

This will allow the researcher to compare the experiences of the agency leader with the literature to identify discrepancies or weaknesses that may trigger suggestions for the transition from specialist role to leadership role.

### **3.5 Research Design**

Qualitative research is associated with a variety of strategies and each strategy has a specific emphasis and scope as well as a set of procedures (Saunders et al. 2016). A case study was used in this study because, it is an account that describes, explains or explores details about an organisation, a programme, a policy process or an institutional arrangement (Eller, Gerber & Robinson, 2018). The study used a case study approach, with ECDA being the organisation being studied. Phenomenology holds that any attempt to understand social reality has to be grounded in first hand (Delport, Fouche & Schurink, 2018) people's experiences of that social reality (Bless,

Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2018; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Gray, 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

This means that, the interest is in understanding social phenomenon from the actors' own perspectives and describing the world as experienced by the subjects "with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015:30). Since there are different participants involved, each of them whom has their own authentic meaning and interpretation, there are multiple realities and accounts (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Therefore, the researcher has to put to one side any prior concepts or suppositions and seek to understand how everyday events and 'common sense' knowledge are as they are, how they are perceived and sustained by the participants and what the attitudes of the participants are towards them (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

This is vital in understanding the selected Agency leader's personal experiences of transition from specialist to leadership roles. In this context, emphasis is placed on the fully-described subjective experiences, perceptions, interpretations, attitudes, beliefs, values, feelings and meaning of individuals (Denscombe, 2014). Through the eyes of participants, come rich description and fidelity to the original experience, which this study sought. The limitations of phenomenology are that it lacks the scientific tenets of 'objectivity', analysis and measurement, may not move beyond description (e.g. to analyses and explanation), may not be generalizable and may focus on everyday events to the neglect of bigger issues (Denscombe, 2014).

### **3.6. Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

In this study, the population comprised of fifteen executive personnel, who are spread evenly across the Agency's departments, who have transitioned from specialist to leadership roles. Using an inductive analysis (Patton, 2015), qualitative research uses purposeful sampling of rich information for in-depth study to document diversity and look for themes and patterns across case studies (Dane, 2018; Patton, 2015; Salkind, 2018). Purposive sampling involves selecting and identifying groups of individuals or individuals that are especially experienced with or knowledgeable about a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Out of the fifteen executives, a sample of six was purposefully selected. The six had been working in the Agency

for at least, the last five years and held the new leadership position for, at least the last three years. This was used selection and inclusion criteria for the sample.

### **3.7. Methods and Instruments of Data Collection**

A phenomenological research tradition using semi-structured interviews method was applied in this study. While researchers refer to different types of instruments, particularly interview guides (Durdella, 2019), the researcher used semi-structured interview guide (Kumar, 2018; Patton, 2015) as a data collection tool/technique in this study (Durdella 2019). The researcher intentionally aligned this study's interview questions to research questions to use data collected to evaluate the research problem (Durdella, 2019; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

This method was used in this study because during a semi-structured interview, the interviewer was not only able to ask a certain number of specific questions, but was also able to pose additional probes (Brink *et al.*, 2014; Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Semi-structured interviews therefore allowed respondents some latitude and freedom to talk about what was of importance to them, making room for the conversation to go in unexpected directions (Brink *et al.*, 2014), while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Jarbandhan & Schutte, 2006). When semi-structured interviews were used, the researcher allowed the conversation to develop, exploring new topics that are relevant to the interviewee (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

The interview guide used in this study comprised questions written to guide interviews (Fouché & Schurink, 2018). It provided the researcher with a set of predetermined questions that were used as an appropriate instrument to engage the participant and designate the narrative terrain (Holstein & Gubrium 1995; Monette, Sullivan & De Long, 2005). Since the Interview Guide was produced beforehand, it forced the researcher to think explicitly about what she wanted to cover during the interview (Holstein & Gubrium 1995; Monette *et al.* 2005). Ethical clearance was approved, and interviews were conducted during the leaders' free time and each interview lasted for approximately 40 minutes.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The common data analysis technique in qualitative approach is content analysis (Denscombe, 2014; Patton, 2015). Through inductive reasoning (Patton, 2015) themes, subthemes and categories emerging from textual data are identified and interpreted. In this study, data was analysed according to the research questions. The collected data was transcribed and further reading was done to familiarize with raw data. Coding of the data was vital to bring together similar data for categorization and theming and interpretation. Bertram and Christiansen (2015) define a transcript as a written document, which reflects what was said during an interview and it sometimes includes comments on gestures. Eventually, the rich descriptive data from the interviews helped the researcher to understand the participants' construction of knowledge and reality (Nieuwenhuis 2010). The propositions formulated in chapter three together with the Bridges' (1991) Transition Theory were used as the guiding principles to analyse and understand the leaders' experiences and how the transitions in roles shape their identity. The quality of the study was enhanced through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four indicators of trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability). This was important because interpretive knowledge construction is regulated by standards of trustworthiness and authenticity (Li, Liping & Khan, 2018:5).

### **3.9 Research Quality**

Reliability and validity are essential features of characteristics of qualitative research because the research becomes insignificant in the absence of accuracy, loses its value and ultimately becomes useless (Morse et al., 2002). Accordingly, the researcher concentrated on the methods developed for qualitative research for the purposes of this study, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Anney, 2014:272). Shenton (2004:64) outlined four methods that allow qualitative research to increase its reliability and these are credibility (internal validity related), transferability (external validity related), dependability (reliability associated) and conformability (objectivity associated). In the current study, the reliability of the codes was tested through online interviews due to covid 19 pandemic.

#### **3.9.1 Credibility**

According to Anney (2014:276), credibility is defined as the trust that the findings of the research can place in the facts. Therefore it determines whether or not the results of the study reflect credible knowledge from the original data of the participants and whether it is a valid representation of the original views of the participants (Anney 2014:276). The researcher addressed the participants' viewpoints fairly so as to encourage readers to make rational decisions (Creswell, 2014). All participants were treated as partners as they were the ones doing most of the talking; the researcher was more of a listener in order to protect against interference with her power (Cohen et al., 2007).

### **3.9.2 Transferability**

Transferability meant readers will apply the research results to circumstances similar to the ones examined (Creswell, 2009). Anney (2014:277) described transferability as the level at which the qualitative research results can be transferred with other respondents to different contexts. It is the interpretive counterpart of generalizability, in other words. Shenton (2004) argued that transferability depends on the depiction of the whole strategy for study design and the sampling methodology. In the current study, the researcher met the transferability criteria by ensuring that the verbal statements were recorded in order to validate their accuracy.

### **3.9.3 Dependability**

Creswell (2009) submitted that dependability occurs when data is immovable under various conditions for some time. The researcher achieved dependability by ensuring that all the transcripts, emails and audio data, were safely kept on the researcher's laptop to ensure its availability.

### **3.9.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is defined as a method that guarantees the researcher's neutrality during the study (Korstjens and Moser, 2017). The researcher is expected to protect and preserve the data by avoiding any self-interest or data manipulation. They further argued that the interpretation should be based on the evidence rather than preferences of the researcher. According to Shenton (2004), the notion of confirmability is the comparable issue of objectivity for the qualitative researcher. The researcher based the findings on the participants' opinions and experiences.

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration and Procedures**

Throughout the study, ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, respect for persons and justice were adhered. Kindly refer to (Appendix A) which is the Final Ethics Approval Letter granted by the Rhodes University Business School – Review Reference Number 2020-1082-3441. Chief Executive Officer of the organization under study granted approval to do Research in the entity, kindly refer to (Appendix B). Participation Consent Form was also signed by the CEO (Appendix C).

#### **3.10.1 Informed consent**

The researcher secured an informed consent from participants (Elias & Theron, 2018; Gaudet & Robert, 2018; Walliman, 2018) by requesting them to sign an informed consent form which is part of Rhodes University's ethical clearance application package. As a key principle with research ethics, prospective research participants were given as much needed information to make an informed decision about whether they wish to participate in a study (Bryman, 2016). The participants had been made aware that they had the right to withdraw their participation in the study at any time without a penalty (Neuman, 2014).

#### **3.10.2 Principle of beneficence**

Through the principle of beneficence (Christians, 2018; Nardi, 2018; Patten & Newhart, 2018), the researcher ensured that the study was of benefit to the organization, the employees and its stakeholders (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017; Patten & Newhart, 2018) through the recommendations made.

#### **3.10.3 Principle of non-maleficence**

Through the principle of non-maleficence, the researcher did not harm the respondents (Carter, 2018; Dörnyeli, 2018; Elias & Theron, 2018) and assured respondents of their confidentiality (Dane, 2018; Nardi, 2018; Salkind, 2019). This is part of the 'process of ensuring anonymity', which refers to the researcher's act of keeping the participants' identities a secret with regard to their participation in the research study and anonymity (Devlin, 2018; Eller *et al.*, 2018; Gaudet & Robert). It is also part of the act of ensuring privacy of respondents by not availing their details to

anyone (Hammersley, 2017; van Wyk, 2015; Patten & Newhart, 2018). Therefore, the study was ethically conducted.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter described all the different processes and measures employed in conducting this study. A phenomenological research approach was explained in detail. It explained the rationale of choosing qualitative research over quantitative and mixed methods. For this study, the case study approach within an interpretive research framework has been discussed. Ethical considerations have been discussed, which relate to integrity, confidentiality, transferability and reliability. The following chapter, chapter 4 will focus on data presentation, interpretation and research findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to examine how the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist role to the leadership roles, and how this shaped their leadership identity. The ECDA comprises of 6 branches with Head Office in East London.

The data was collected through online interviews with six leaders, who had experienced this transition. In this chapter, the data are analysed and the findings are presented thematically according to the research objectives, which were: 1. To establish the changes experienced by leaders during the transition process from a specialist role to a leadership role. 2. To identify challenges experienced by leaders during the transition process. 3. To establish how the leaders let go of old realities. 4. To describe their readiness for the new situation; 5. To identify the support needs of leaders during the transition process. 6. To describe how the leaders define themselves in the new role and its identity. 7. To formulate recommendations on how to support leaders in a development agency during the transition process. First, the demographic information of the participants is presented.

## 4.2 Demographic Information of the Participants

Table 4.1: Biographical Information of Participants

Gender			Age		Qualification	
Code	Frequency	Percentage	Code	Years	Level	Frequency
Male	4	66.7	P1	47	Diploma	1
Female	2	33.3	P2	41	Masters	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100 %</b>	P3	51	PHD	1
			P4	56	Degree	1
			P5	58	Honours	1
			P6	51	Diploma	1
			<b>Average</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Position Experience</b>			<b>Direct Report</b>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Years</b>		<b>Code</b>	<b>Reports</b>		
P1	15		P1	5		
P2	10		P2	4		
P3	11		P3	10		
P4	5		P4	11		
P5	8		P5	6		
P6	6		P6	4		
<b>Average</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>Average</b>	<b>7</b>		

Source: Field data 2020.

From the data presented in Table 4.1, the youngest participant was 41 years, while the oldest was 58 years. On average, the participants were 51 years of age. The participants had held their leadership positions for at least 5 years, with 15 years being the highest. The minimum education qualification among the participants was a National Diploma, and the highest was a PHD Degree. Finally, the minimum direct reports were 4, and the highest were 11.

The following sections present the findings thematically.

## 4.3 Changes Experienced by Leaders during the Transition Process

### 4.3.1 Change in responsibilities

The first objective of the study sought to establish the changes experienced by the leaders during the transition process from specialist role to leadership roles. The data revealed mixed reactions as some of the participants were comfortable with changes, while others felt that the responsibilities were overwhelming and they had not prepared for that. To illustrate the participants' perceptions, P1 opined that:

*“For me leadership role has nothing to do with the position. You can be a leader in whatever position you are in. Leadership is about the influence one has in their area. For me transition was not that drastic. If you can have a heart of the unit you are in, position doesn’t matter” (P1).*

However, to the contrary that the transition was not drastic, two participants complained of change of responsibilities by saying that:

*“The transition was forced by the integration of my previous institution into the current organization I work for. I felt like the responsibility was far more involved than what I was previously did” (P4).*

*“The transition was very challenging as there were many functions and expectations from immediate manager. The leadership role came with added responsibilities in the form of having people reporting directly to me. To drive a team of people and having to account on my work is quite demanding” (P5).*

From these interview extracts the main change experienced during the transition on responsibilities, can be interpreted to be increased work load and duties.

#### **4.3.2 Communication as an Ideal Component of Transition**

During the interviews, the participants alluded to communication being a foundation for every change in an organization. This allows leaders and other personnel to prepare for the new roles and responsibilities. The importance of communication was highlighted by participant P1, P3, and P4. They had the following to say:

*“For me, the foundation for any transition is realistic information” (P1).*

*“It is where you are given your work according to your qualification, but also given an opportunity to act and get exposed to issues of leadership” (P3).*

*“In an ideal world one has to be somehow prepared and guided in transitioning from a different job responsibility into a new one. In this case guidance and preparation were even more necessary, in the sense that the transition also entailed moving from one organizational culture into a different one” (P4).*

Another participant added that psychological preparedness was necessary for leaders to be ready for any task ahead. This implies that transition can affect the mental and emotional state of the leaders if not properly communicated. Participant P2 opined that:

*“I think awareness and communication are key for rational understanding. There must also be some psychological preparedness on the person to undergo that process. So feedback sessions are very important, and whatever change is done must be enshrined in prescripts of law. For example, you can’t run away from the LRA, so that the process is seen as authentic. A participatory approach is the best so that you get a buy in into the approach and also be part of the whole process” (P2).*

From the above extracts, an ideal transition should be based on clear communication, guidance, preparation and providing opportunity for experimenting before taking up the full responsibility. Therefore, from these findings, one can conclude that the leaders involved in the transition in the Agency were able to identify what changes took place and how they felt about them.

#### **4.4 Challenges Experienced in the Transition**

The data shows that the leaders experienced some challenges in relation to transition process. To some, this was a forced initiative and lack proper preparation. However, other participants argued that this was not a drastic change, as leadership is about positions. On the other hand, previously incomplete organizational structures presented more challenges to transition in the Agency, as illustrated by participant P4 below.

*“I suppose that what further complicated the process, was the fact that the Agency was still dealing with the incomplete process of the other previous amalgamation. To even begin to talk about any common, shared and identifiable organizational culture would be a misrepresentation. The context was such that one had to hit the ground running and draw from whatever limited experience one might have had from previous life experiences” (P4)*

He further added that:

*“I came into the new role after having spent ten years as an Executive Mayor of a Local Municipality. It was a radical shift in the sense that one moved from a political leadership role in local government, to becoming some kind of a Manager in the field of agriculture. I found it very challenging to now having to grapple with the nuts and bolts of agriculture without any prior experience”*  
(P4).

In support of P4, participant P5 also argued that the new roles come with different level of challenges, which might create anxiety for the leaders. He narrated that:

*“Progression from one level to another level has its own challenges. Besides, being an upward mobility in the corporate ladder, the responsibilities come with challenges. What is expected in the new role, result at times in an anxiety as to whether you are performing as expected. Once things do not go well, people might doubt you as to whether the upward mobility was not too soon or was it justifiable”* (P5).

*“There was a lot of suspicion, people not knowing why somebody is put in the position. So, when we moved from the old institution and I was appointed into this position, there were people who felt they were also capable. Now they don’t know how this was done because there were no interviews. But there was a process put in place to look at your qualifications, experience and then they would match your skills and experience to the particular job that was available. Even to this day some people feel that they were not properly placed, they make excuses for non- performance”* (P3).

From this narrative, lack of common practice, preparation, training and familiar organizational culture as well as performance indicators for the new role were lacking. This therefore, hampered the smooth transition for some leaders in the Agency. Issues of job evaluation, positioning and remuneration was also reported as a challenge in this study.

#### **4.5 Identity and Management of Old and New Realities of Leaders**

The study among other objectives sought to establish how the leaders dealt with the issues of identity in their roles. The data revealed similar reactions because all the

participants in the study experienced change in their identity. Alluding to this observation, these are comments from some of the participants: P3 opined that -

*“For me there might be a difference, I was a doer, wanting things to be done, in this new role it’s about oversight, whereby I need to see things happen and if they don’t happen then there is that panic, as this will affect my performance and all that. In the old role I was a doer and now I am an overseer” (P3).*

For participant P3, the transition did change their old identity. Participant P4, experienced the shift in identity as he highlighted that:

*“It was a radical shift in the sense that one moved from a political leadership role in local government, to becoming some kind of a Manager in the field of agriculture. I came into the Agency at a time when the organization was undergoing very serious challenges with regard to the performance of its loan portfolio. The lofty notions I had about the role of development finance in facilitating, promoting and supporting black communities in the context of rural development, were soon tempered by the realities confronting the Agency’s loan portfolio. Instead of having to account about the extent of impact the loan financing was having on the livelihoods of communities, the key question now has become the rate of recovering monies that have been loaned to the majority of un-bankable rural communities” (P4).*

Briefly, from this narrative we find that the leader presumed a role of a manager, but on reality it played the role of debt collector. This might have presented serious challenges with identity having come from a political leadership background. The need to be focused is illustrated in the following interview extracts:

*“I normally like to think of my current experience in the Agency as follows ‘the old is refusing to die and the new is struggling to be born’. What currently gives me comfort is the recent strategy review process that the Agency has been through, which has resulted into a strategic plan that mostly resonates with my understanding of rural development. It will still require a lot of effort and willingness to internalize the strategic plan before there can be tangible results on the ground” (P4).*

*“Leadership comes with commitment and lot of responsibility. It is important to know what is expected of you. There is a need to embrace change and what is expected of you. As a leader one needs to be on top of things, be self-motivated and be able to deliver on time and with efficiency” (P5).*

In terms of financial status of the leaders, it was noted that the new roles have financial benefits that motivated the leaders in their duties. However, the workload and time spent on organizational matters was overwhelming for some leaders. Participant P3 had the following to share:

*“Every leadership position comes with incentives that motivate you to work hard. Of course it made me to be able to manage my monthly expenses better, but you will see that at the end of the day when you compare the work load, the meetings etc. you find that it comes to the same [previous earnings], because you sacrifice more times. You find that managers are not allowed to claim overtime, and if you were to claim overtime it would have been a lot of money, but the juniors are claiming a lot of overtime. I think it’s a 50/50” (P3).*

#### **4.6 Readiness in Taking New Positions**

As alluded earlier, transition has many challenges: preparedness and readiness for new position being one of them. This study to a large extent showed that the leaders were ready (P6, P3, P4) to take new positions as they embraced change. However, some participants were of the contrary view as argued that, one can never be ready. This participant opined that:

*“One can never say you are ready but what is needed is to deliver on time as per job description and be able to meet targets as per the employment contract” (P5).*

Participant P2 brings to our attention that preparing yourself for closure is an important element for readiness for a new role. This is significant to avoid backlogs in responsibilities which may hinder smooth uptake of new ones.

*“I believe that closure is very important. I think I am fit for the new role and I am*

*making a difference” (P2).*

On whether the participants could support the reversal of the transition, the majority could not support it, for it would jeopardize their jobs and their current positions. This means that the transition was a positive development for the Agency as per the participants' views.

Participant P6 for instance was concerned that it would be retrogressive in her career to go back. She had the following to say:

*“No, I could not support it because is like going back to where I was.*

*Everyone want to grow in life and progress in career” (P6).*

#### **4.7 Work Load and Skills**

The data revealed that there was shift in use of skills as well as the work load. Such shift included the implementation of skills as specialist to sharing of the skills as a leader. To illustrate this shift, participant P1 note that “As a specialist you implement your knowledge, and as a leader you need to share that knowledge to assist others to implement”. This observation was further emphasized by participant P3 by arguing that:

*“...but this time is about management, problem solving and giving solutions to people. The similarity between the field and now is about solutions. As a specialist I was giving solutions to those people, now I am giving solutions to my team. Those are the things that I have found. Comparing the two roles, the one in management is too demanding” (P3).*

The participants also reported that their skills matched with the workload as some had considerable experience before the new roles.

For instance, P5 indicated noted that

*“It does match and coupled with that, the change came at the right time as I had relatively gained experience over the period. Having worked for the institution for a long period I was able to assess what the expectations are from management about various positions and what are the key deliverables”. However, managing the shift*

*within roles and skills was left for the leaders to figure out, as there was no training to that effect. (P5)*

This is illustrated by participant P1 who narrated that:

*“...it’s interesting because you do not have people training you. When you are a specialist, you are trained to become that specialist, but now no one sends you on a leadership course or training. I find that transition difficult, but how I overcame it was using previous experiences when I was a specialist, that is, I do what would I like someone to do for me. And that is how I managed” (P1).*

In addition participant P2 illustrated clearly how her workload and application of skills changed to become both an input and output in his position. The participant narrated that:

*“As a specialist my role was to provide the CEO with statistics and facts, then the responsibility of putting the document together was his. In the new position, my team members provide me with such information and then consolidate the document. Now I have become an input and output at the same time because I must make sure that I consolidate a good document, unlike when I was a specialist I was only an input” (P2).*

#### **4.8 Organizational Structure and Addressing the Needs of the Agency**

The study revealed that the transition at the agency was informed by new leadership that came into place. This is evidenced by participant P1 comment that:

*“It was necessary [transition] because we came to the end of the administration, we got a new MEC (Member of the Executive Council). The organization took a whole new beginning and we actually crafted a 5 year strategy. With the new 5 year plan strategy the implementation changed. To implement the new strategy one needs to adjust the organizational structure accordingly” (P1).*

This view was supported by participant P6, who argued that the structure had to change because new positions were being created and other ones being removed. Further, the study revealed that the organization rarely recruits from outside, therefore

creating new positions and opportunities leads to transitions of roles and skills in the organization. Participant P4 informs that integration of organizations by the government creates new organizational structures and define the role of leaders, hence leading a transition. He narrated that:

*“I always like to link the first transition to when my previous organization was integrated into the Agency. I think this integration was necessitated by the need for government to rationalize the number of its funded development entities. The other transition is the one which is currently happening within the Agency after it has undertaken the strategy review process” (P4).*

With respect to the stakeholders being involved in the process of transition, the study revealed that there were internal and external consultative efforts in place. This was important to ensure that the transition was smooth and supported by all stakeholders. The appreciation for the consultation is illustrated by the following participants:

*P1: “In our case we really went out of our way to consult, both externally and internally. As a strategy team we visited each and every branch, provided them with a platform to raise their concerns, they gave us ideas as to what would work, and make their lives better. We went to the communities and we said to them “what are your needs? From what we have been doing for the past 5 years what do you think went wrong and how would you like us to improve it?” so we really did a 360 degree consultative process with internal and external stakeholders. Out of that, we formulated a strategy that is aligned with our mandate. For us everyone was involved in that transition process”.*

*P3: “At my level, I am one of the people that I was interacting with this [transition process], some of them are Board members. In my portfolio I was reporting to a committee and that committee reports to the Board, and all were giving me support in terms of making me understand”.*

To the contrary, there are some participants who felt that the consultation was not meaningful enough to all the role players, and only focused on senior leaders. In regard to this, participant P2 and P4 narrated the following:

*“During the previous integration process, there was no meaningful participation by all role players in the decision making. Those who in my view had an opportunity to participate in decision making, were those who were already in very “senior” managerial positions. I think it was a question of a pay grade determining one’s proximity to decision making processes” (P4).*

*“It depended on your level. The decision making was more by the senior executives, consultation was done as a compliance more than the normal participatory approach. We were consulted and put on our proposals but the senior executives would still decide otherwise” (P2).*

Notably, the organogram of the Agency did not change due to transition, however, the study revealed that the change of organogram is work in progress. Transition was an internal exercise, which did not necessitate an abrupt change of the structure. The following interview extract attest to this finding:

*“That is the process we are currently busy with and it will change drastically” (P1).*

*“It didn’t change [organogram] because, like I said, the organogram remained the way it is. It was a matter of internal processes that had to happen, it did not affect the organogram” (P3).*

In contrary to these participants, P2 alluded to the fact that the transition duplicated some units and therefore overcrowding the organogram. He illustrated this by arguing that:

*“It affected it [organogram] in the sense that in the very same ECRA there were units doing same thing in a thin line. It didn’t help much because when you get to this role you find that your role is very similar to that of the other person. An example is my unit called Business Support and Social Facilitation and there is also a unit called New Business Development, and also SMME Development. If you look at these 3 units they are actually dealing with SMMEs, Cooperatives etc. In some cases people feel their jobs have been downgraded and some upgraded” (P2).*

From this narrative, it is clear that the implementation of the transition process was ongoing, and the participants did not have a definite answer to whether the transition

addressed the needs that lead to the initiation of the transition. This has further caused lack of clear measurement for effectiveness and efficiency in leadership roles at the Agency.

#### **4.9 Leaders Experiences during and after the Transition**

It was not very clear how the Agency managed the change especially with regard to resistance, and adoption. However, some participants highlighted that training and coaching was used to help the leaders carry their roles and responsibilities. For instance, participant P4 highlighted that:

*“I think challenges around change management are on-going. This is further exacerbated by the lack of appropriate management of the previous amalgamation processes. Whilst the Agency was ideally a product of two different entities merged into one organization, the reality has always been of an organization with one integrated personnel, but without any organizational culture which is shared across the board”.*

However, to the contrary P5 was of different opinion by arguing noting that change management is done through training and development to show people why they need to change.

Further, the study indicated that there is lack of support system for the leaders in their new roles. The leaders were left to carve their own ways of accomplishing the tasks as per job description. This is evidenced in the following interview extracts:

*P3: “I don’t think I get support from my managers, it’s very rare. You have to be on your own to demonstrate that you are able to do your work. Then, if you have a boss who is not there for you, you have to do a lot of things”.*

*P4: “There is a strong indication that with the adoption of the new strategic plan, our Corporate Services Unit will prioritize its role for supporting functionaries in my position”.*

These narratives indicate that there was absence of support in assuming the new role, hence limiting the efficiency and effectiveness of the transition objectives.

On the other hand, however, some leaders took a personal initiative to ensure that they learnt and familiarized themselves with new responsibilities. Participant P2 reported that:

*“One of the things I did when I went to the new role, is that I spent more time with my supervisor to understand what is expected of me. I also studied a lot of documents. I then prepared my own plan of what would guide me to do my work in the new position. I didn’t find it difficult to cope, I actually made a difference” (P2).*

Based on the above views, the leaders used different ways of managing the change in workload and the needed skills. This point to lack of common framework in assisting leader to assume their new roles in the Agency.

#### **4.10 Strategies to ensure Successful Organizational Transition**

In order to have a successful transition from specialist to leadership roles, the participants recommended mentoring and training. This is to enable leaders to develop organizational leadership skills. In addition, consultation with all significant stakeholders is important to have full support both internally and externally.

Participant P2 emphasized the importance of transparency by recommending that:

*“There is need to be transparent from the word go. There must be a document drafted and agreed by the parties in the form of a charter. Then someone from outside would run that process so that there is no conflict of interest. The problem is that we make the people affected to be part of the solution” (P2).*

Additionally, developing a concrete succession plan is vital to ensure that transition is successful and effective in an organization. Participant P6 highlight that:

*“The organization should have some form of succession plan, and identify those with potential skills and capacitate them to take responsibilities where need be” (P6).*

These findings show that transitions should not be an abrupt exercise for an organization, but a well-organized and planned process involving multiple stakeholders.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on data analysis. The interview data has been analysed and key findings have been presented thematically. All the participants had more than five year of experiences in their leadership roles. The key themes identified from the data were changes experienced by the leaders, participation and consultation, challenges faced, leadership identity, workload and skills, organizational structure and strategies for successful organization transition. These findings are further interpreted and discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on data analysis and presentation. In this chapter, the findings are further interpreted and discussed in relation to available literature. This is important in understanding the experiences of leaders in the current study at ECDA.

#### 5.2 Transition as a process

The study has revealed mixed reactions from the participants on the aspects of transition from specialist role to leadership role in the Agency. For instance, four of the participants agreed that the transition was not drastic because anyone can be a leader in whatever position they are by using the negotiation, networking, analytical and leadership skills for organizational development. This resonates with Bridges' (1991) view that transition is psychological and leaders should prepare themselves holistically for changes in the organization. The ending is characterized by letting go of old realities and preparing oneself for a new situation; the neutral zone is the core of the transition, characterized by replacement of old behaviours with new one. Though there is no ideal process, the organization is supposed to guide, coach and nurture employees to smoothly transition into the different roles. Therefore, the Agency needs to undertake an introspection and reflect on own capabilities to inform gaps in terms of knowledge so that appropriate training and support can be provided.

All the participants in this study believed that it was the Executive's responsibility to initiate and implement transition in an organization, however the employees must also be given realistic information through proper communication channels. This is important because in the new beginning phase of transition, the individuals undergoing transition are to be prepared for their new roles to obtain the required skills and expertise (Vrazel, 2013). Hence, the employees must be coached and nurtured before being placed into new leadership roles. As expressed by the participants in this study, the *Batho Pele* (People-centrism) principles are key tools for a successful transition process, and that each employee must be assisted to prepare for leadership roles.

Further, Key Performance Indicators (role demarcation) should be clear for each individual employee. All processes should be completed before a new transition process could begin to avoid complications. According to Gentry, Logan and Tonidandel (2014), failure to equip the individuals involved in the transition process with the necessary leadership skills makes transition difficult and challenging. In view of this, the participants in this study reported that as a specialist, ones' role is to implement knowledge, give advice and solutions on the field, whilst as a leader one shares that knowledge for the implementation and provides solution to the team. Therefore, adequate prior preparation is required to ensure the smooth uptake of responsibilities (Jaca, 2018).

The study found some positive efforts with regard to preparations as the Agency capacitated the employees in leadership, reporting and accountability. For a smoother transition, internal and external consultations, transparency and active participation of all stakeholders is necessary. This is significant because whilst transition from specialists to leadership roles can be exciting, it has proven to be equally stressful for the incumbents (Jaca, 2018). In the case of this study, the leaders experienced stress with new leadership roles of leading others, new and increased workloads, new responsibilities which required new skills and expectations to deliver. The main source of stress in transitions stems from various and distinct leadership competencies required in post transition in the organization (Jaca, 2018). Entering the new role is therefore the beginning and not the end goal.

The study revealed that various changes were experienced by the participants such as dealing with challenging situations, working with none or minimal supervision, becoming a teacher, time management and meeting deadlines timely. They also undertook trial and error methods in learning the new job. These findings are in line with Bridges (1991) three-phase of transition and Jaca (2018) in that transition is about shedding away old realities, behaviour and adopting new ones. As indicated in this study transition brings about growth in leadership skills, learning to strike a balance between managerial responsibilities and the leadership role. The balancing of responsibilities is important for leaders to manage resistance to change which could derail the progress of the organisation. This is in line with Day's (2000) argument that leadership development approach should be oriented towards building organisational

capacity to proactively perform the basic leadership tasks such as setting direction, creating alignment, maintaining commitment and motivation.

### **5.3 The challenges experienced by leaders during the transition process**

The study revealed that some of the leaders did not understand why the change was initiated, some experienced difficulties in managing teams, and there was resistance from other team members. There was lack of guidance to the leaders, subordinates were discouraged, and there were elements of suspicion and fear of new leadership. These findings corroborate with Jaca (2018) and Ashforth (2001) in that each role carries with it an identity that contains specific values, goals, beliefs, norms, interaction styles, and time horizons. In this context for example, specialists are sure of what they are doing, whereas as leaders there is a level of uncertainty, when dealing with their subordinates.

This presents serious personal and organizational challenges. This is worsened by lack of assistance from within the organisation to address the challenges. According to Chang et al. (2005) people experience stress during transition, and therefore they need support in the form of stress management. They further indicated that as specialists, transitioning to leadership roles they experienced lack of role clarity, stress (role strain), resistance, inadequate support, shock, increased work load (role strain) and role conflict. According to Paese and Michelle (2006) it is highlighted that individuals encounter ambiguity if their expectations are not made clear when transition occurs.

This hinders the success of the transition. These challenges according to the study could be addressed through mentorship and feasible succession plans in the organization. The grading of positions, job evaluations, collection of portfolios of evidence, supporting documentation and embracing common organizational cultures are useful to address challenges encountered during and after the transition. The Agency under the study was addressing some of its challenges through workshops and research to develop best practices in leadership.

### **5.4 Identity – how Leaders let go of old realities and embrace new ones**

The study established that in the old roles as specialists they were confined in being doers but currently, they are leaders and the position provided them with different

opportunities. Stryker and Burke (2000) argue that how we act has a great deal with who we think we are and how we see ourselves. Thus, a role identity is a self-view, or a meaning attributed to oneself in relation to a specific role, which is generated reflexively through perceived appearance to self or others, self-judgment of that appearance, and effect based on that judgment (Stryker and Burke, 2000). Farmer, Kung-McIntyre and Tierney (2003) state that a role identity reflects an internalized set of role expectations, with the importance of the identity being a function of commitment to the relevant role.

In the new positions, leaders tend to place more emphasis on authority and control. This may or may not find support from the subordinates. To manage their old realities, the leaders in the Agency coped with the changes and expectations of the transition by focusing to policies and procedures, and adhering to responsibilities. The old realities have to be foregone to accommodate the new ones. Therefore, to achieve new identities leaders had to acquaint themselves with job descriptions and ensure targets are achieved within certain timelines. In other words embracing change and self-motivation is important to balance between the old and new realities.

The majority of participants stated that career pathing and positive attitude to learn and improve self were motivators to accept and support the transition from being a specialist and becoming a leader. They perceived that willingness to develop and adapt within the organization assist in employee satisfaction and developing new identities.

## **5.5 Support Needs during and after the transition**

As noted earlier, transition comes with many changes and challenges. Therefore leaders require support to adapt to their new responsibilities. The study established that the leaders needed support to build their own support system, develop good relations, trust and opportunity to work independently. Apart from the organisational support, other sources of support include family and colleagues. Assuming a new role is exciting but can be difficult and complex especially when it requires leadership expertise (Weidling and Dimmock, 2006). According to Murphy (2011), for effective performance, novice leaders should be adequately trained and supported for the new role. In addition, Sirkis (2011) and Nguyen (2012) also advocate for thorough training and preparation of new leaders with regard to leadership, management roles,

responsibilities and duties. Failure to support new leaders, Ellis, Vriesendorp and Galer (2005) caution that they may re-embrace their previous roles and identities thereby creating hindrances to the process of transition.

### **5.6 Behavioural changes relating from the Amalgamation**

The Entity had to go through the Amalgamation and this meant combining two entities into one. According to Participants this amalgamation was critical although it meant drastic changes for all of them. Most of them were moved from their comfortable regions to the central head office. This meant for some investing in buying new homes, move with family. For others they had to rent closer to head office whilst they maintained their homes. This brought a lonely and a costly life for some. As much as they moved from specialists to leadership roles there were times that they were doing their old jobs due to previous relationships they formed. There was a definite change in their behaviours, as specialists they were knowledge implementers and as leaders they change to knowledge sharing. As specialists there was Training but none as Leaders. As leaders they were expected by their superiors to see the bigger picture, teach others and their subordinates expected them as leaders to be on their side. Fight for them, empathise and listen. The participants felt that they were not capacitated for the new roles.

### **5.7 Conclusion**

The study established that the Agency had to undergo a transition because it had come to the end of administration. In this case, there was need for a better coordination, consolidation, efficiency and to avoid duplication in services. In order to achieve these ideals in the long-term, there is need to promote succession plan and determine career pathing and development.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the data analysis and presentation of findings. This chapter discusses drawing conclusions, making recommendations and reporting on the limitations of the study. The main objective of the study was to examine how the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity. The following are the conclusions made with relation to the propositions formulated in chapter three.

#### 6.2 Conclusion based on Propositions

Informed by Bridges 1991 three-phase of transition and the literature on leadership and organisational changes, the following seven propositions were made.

1. The organization handled the *transition process* using knowledge and transition experiences from other organisations that had successfully done it.

According to the evidence gathered in this study through online interviews, the study established that the transition process made use of stakeholder consultations both internally and externally.

2. The transition from specialist role to leadership role was strategically *supported* by all stakeholders

The study revealed mixed reactions with regard to supporting the transition. Some participants felt that the transition was forced on them, whilst others argued that they were well prepared for it. Therefore, this means that the transition might not have received support from all the stakeholders.

3. The transitioning leaders viewed the new *organizational structure* differently as compared to the previous one.

The study established that the organisational structure was under review at the time of this study.

4. The transitioning agency leaders had challenges with *roles and skills* in their new positions.

From both the literature and the theoretical frameworks, leaders experience role confusion, anxiety and sometimes a mismatch of skills with positions allocated to them during a transition. This study established that some leaders had challenges with regard to roles, since there was not enough preparation and training to take up the new roles. Therefore, the data confirmed this proposition that the Agency's leader faced challenges in their new positions.

5. The agency as well as the leaders had challenges with *change management* more especially adapting to the leadership ideology and processes.

Change is complex and an irresistible component of an organisational development and growth. This study revealed that the transition was perceived as the better option for the organisation. In this case, there was little resistance to the changes in the organisation. Therefore, there was no challenge with change management at the Agency and after the transition.

6. The main changes in the transition from specialist roles to leadership roles have affected the leaders' *career development*.

Organisational changes affect the career path of employee and the leaders. This study revealed that the leaders had mixed reactions on whether the new roles shaped their career development. Some were of the opinion that the transition did not affect their career in any way, whilst others agreed that the transition did affect their career path. In conclusion therefore, the transition positively or negatively affected the career development of the leaders.

7. The transition from specialist role to leadership role impacted upon the leaders' identity in the organization.

One of the main concerns of this study was identity of leaders after the transition. Bridges' 1991 three-phase model of transition illustrate how leaders fear losing their identities during a transition. Indeed, this study established that the leaders gained new identities especially from specialist to leader. The role expected to be played primarily defined their new identities and they had to learn how to go about it. Therefore, this study confirmed that the transition at the Agency impacted on leaders identities.

### **6.3 Limitations**

The study was limited to one Agency in Eastern Cape Province. Since the other Agencies in the area were not studied, the results cannot be generalised. Moreover, the study used a sample of 6 leaders that was subjected to online interviews due to Covid 19 pandemic. Perhaps, if the study had utilised a larger sample, the study could have yielded different results. The Leaders who were appointed externally straight to leadership positions were not included in this study.

The study also focused on the transition process, challenges, and leaders' identities. It did not look at the effectiveness and efficiency of transition in the development programs and how they assist newly appointed leaders. Therefore, the study did not investigate in detail the impact of transition within the Agency. However, despite these limitations, the study generated insightful findings on the experiences of the leaders on transition from specialist role to leadership role, and how did this affect their identities.

### **6.4 Recommendations for the organization and Future Research**

The study established that the transition process at the Agency was not very clear and strategic in nature. In order to inform and improve future organisational transitions the following recommendations are made:

- (i) Timely and clear communication – there is need for thorough internal and external consultations when initiating and undertaking any organisational restructuring. This is important for all stakeholders to support and implement the intended change. Further, this assists in getting all the stakeholders to know what is expected, the responsibilities and the impact the change will have on everybody.
- (ii) It should perhaps partner with an independent professional consultant to ensure positive results for change.
- (iii) Knowledge management and creation inside the organisation should be top priority. This is because the study established that the Agency usually recruits its senior management internally. Therefore, knowledge sharing is critical in this Agency.

- (iv) Annual skills audit, workplace skills plan, and annual training plan should be prioritized to ensure that staff is capacitated and there is multi skilling in the organisation. Mentoring sessions for the leaders is highly recommended.
- (v) For future studies, researchers should include subordinates in their studies to capture their views on what they expect of their leaders, since the current study focused on leaders only.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This study focused on leaders' experiences on transition from specialist role to leadership role. The literature on leadership development within organisation, enhances the understanding of transition and its challenges. The main difference between the specialists and leaders from both the literature and the current study is that, the first is the doer and the latter does amongst others: oversight, problem solving, listening, identifying potential challenges, providing support, team building, people management and coaching. The Agency is privileged to have leaders of this calibre, their can do attitude, agility, flexibility and adaptability is what made them carry through during the trying times. They have a positive attitude and willingness to learn. The Covid 19 pandemic forced employees in the organization to make use of online methods. This needed a lot of adjustment from their end coupled with long working hours. The organisation can provide for employee participation with regards to the importance of each performance management function to design an effective performance management system that is embraced by employees (Ochurub, et al., 2012). Moreover, the study revealed a number of challenges related to the transition such as lack of preparedness, lack of: consultation with all stakeholders, training for new roles, and support in executing the new roles. These challenges amongst others hindered the smooth implementation of the transition.

Generally, this study achieved its aim of investigating the Eastern Cape Development Agency leaders experiences of transition from specialist role to leadership role, and how this impacted their identities.

## REFERENCES

- Adnan, A. & Saud, S. (2016). The Effect of Role Overload on Employee Anxiety and Organization Citizenship Behaviour. *Journal of Managerial Science*, X (1): 4554.
- Aitken, P. & Higgs, M. (2012). *Developing Change Leaders –The principles and practices of change leadership development*. Routledge.
- Ali, A. F. & Botha, N. (2006). The role, importance and effectiveness of heads of department in contributing to school improvement in public secondary schools in Gauteng. Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance, Johannesburg.
- Anney, V. (2014). Ensuring the Quality of the Findings of Qualitative Research: Looking at Trustworthiness Criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 5(2), pp. 272-281.
- Ashforth, B. E., Kreiner, G. E., & Fugate, M. (2000). All in a day's work: Boundaries and micro role transitions. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 472–491
- Ashforth, B. E. (2001). All in a day's work. *Boundaries and micro role transitions*. 25, 472–491.
- Bass, B. (1990). *Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research & Managerial Applications*, 3rd Ed., the Free Press, New York, NY.
- Beard, F.K. (1999). Client role ambiguity and satisfaction in client-ad agency relationships. *Journal of Advertising Research*. 39 (2) 69-78
- Bedeian, A. G., & Armenakis, A.A. (1981). "A path-analytic study of the consequences of role conflict and ambiguity." *Academy of management journal*. 24 (2): 417-424.
- Bennis, W. G. and Nanus, B. (1997). *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, HarperCollins, New York.
- Bertram, C. & Christiansen, I. (2015). *Understanding research: An introduction to reading research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Biddle, B.J. 1986. Recent Developments in Role Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*.12, pp. 67-92.

- Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C. & Sithole, S. L. (2018). *Fundamentals of social research methods: An African perspective (4<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Bray, S.R. (1998). Role efficacy within interdependent teams: *Measurement Development and test of theory*. Canada.
- Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing Transitions Making the Most of Change*. Massachusetts: Addison Wesley.
- Brink, H., Van der Walt, C. & Van Rensburg, G. (2014). *Fundamentals of research methodology for health professionals (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Brinkmann, S. & Kvale, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*. London: SAGE.
- Brinkmann, S. (2018). The interview. In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research (5<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. California: SAGE.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A., Bell, E., Hirschohn, P., Dos Santos, A., Du Toit, J. Masenge, A., Van Aardt, I. & Wagner, C. (2014). *Research methodology: Business and management context*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Brynard, D.J., Hanekom, S.X. & Brynard, P.A. (2018). *Introduction to research (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Caldwell, R., (2003). The changing roles of personnel managers: *Old Ambiguities, New Uncertainties*. Journal of Management Studies
- Cameron, E. & Green, M. (2012). *Making Sense of Change Management: A complete Guide to the Models Tools and Techniques of Organizational Change*. London
- Carter, C. (2018). *Successful dissertations: The complete guide for education, childhood and early childhood studies students (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Chang, E. M., Hancock, K. M., Johnson, A., Daly, J. & Jackson, D. (2005). Role stress in nurses: Review of related factors and strategies for moving forward. *Nursing and Health Sciences*, 7, 57-65.

- Chase, S. Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2018). Narrative inquiry: Towards theoretical and methodological maturity. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). California: SAGE.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.
- Creswell, J.W. (2009). Mapping the Field of Mixed Methods Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 3 (2), pp.95-108.
- Cresswell, J.W. Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed method research*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. California: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). USA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J.W. (2015). *A Concise introduction to mixed methods research*. United States of America: SAGE.
- Creswell, J.W. (2016). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Dane, F.C. (2018). *Evaluating research: Methodology for people who need to read research* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). London: SAGE.
- Day, D.V. (2000). Leadership development: a review in context. *Leadership Quarterly*, 11 (4): 581-613.
- De Beer, A. (2017). The role of leading and teamwork in the management process. In Nieuwenhuizen, C. *Entrepreneurial skills* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Cape Town: Juta.
- DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(4), 627- 647.

- De Vos, A. S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C. B. & Delport, C. S. L. (2018). *Research at the grass roots for the social sciences and human service professions*. (4<sup>th</sup> Edition). Pretoria: JL Van Schaik Publishers.
- Delvin, A. S. (2018). *The research experience. Planning, conducting and reporting research*. London: SAGE.
- Denscombe, M. (2014). *The Good Research Guide for small scale social research projects*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research (5<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. California: SAGE.
- Dicicco-Bloom, B. & Crabtree, B.F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40: 314-321.
- Durdella, N. (2019). *Qualitative dissertation methodology: A guide for research design and methods*. London: SAGE.
- Elias, M.J. & Theron, L.C. (2018). Linking purpose and ethics in thesis writing: South African illustrations of an international perspective. In Maree, J.G. *Complete your thesis or dissertation successfully: Practical guidelines*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Eller, W.S., Gerber, B.J. & Robinson, S. (2018). *Public administration research methods: Tools for evaluation and evidence-based practice*. London: Routledge.
- Ellis, A., Vriesendorp, S. & Galer, J. B. (2005). *Managers who lead. A Handbook for Improving Health Services*. Cambridge: Massachusetts.
- Erikson, F. (2018). A history of qualitative inquiry in social and educational research. In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (eds). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research (5<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. California: SAGE
- Farmer, S.M., Kung-McIntyre, K. & Tierney, P. (2003). Employee Creativity in Taiwan. *An Application of role identity theory*, 46(5): 618–630.
- Gaudet, S. & Robert, M. (2018). *A journey through qualitative research: From design to reporting*. London: SAGE.
- Gentry, W. A., Logan, P. & Tonidandel, S. (2014). Understanding the leadership

- challenges of first-time managers: Strengthening your leadership pipeline.
- Gray, D.E. (2018). *Doing research in the world* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition). London: SAGE.
- Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). *Competing paradigms in qualitative research. Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, California. SAGE.
- Hartenian, L.S., Hadaway, F.G. and Badovick, G.J. (2011). Antecedents and Consequences of Role Perceptions: A Path Analytic Approach. *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 10(2): 40-50.
- Heradstveit, G.L. (2015). The impacts of changes on leadership style and behavior. Copenhagen Business School
- Hesse-Biber, S.N. & Leavy, P. (2011). *The practice of qualitative research*. London: SAGE.
- Hill, L. A. (2007). Becoming the Boss. *Harvard business review*, 2-10.
- Hogan, R. & Kaizer, R.B. (2005). What we know about Leadership. California: SAGE.
- Holstein, J.A. & Gubrium, J.F. (1995). *The creative interview*. California: SAGE.
- Holtzhausen, D. (2014). *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*. London: Routledge.
- Hooijberg, R., Hunt, J. G. & Dodge, G.E. (1997). Leadership complexity and development of the leaderplex model. *Journal of Management*, 23(3): 375-408
- Horey, J.D. & Fallesen, J.J. (2003). Competency Based Future Leadership Requirements. United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioural and Social Sciences.
- Hsieh, Y. & Hsieh, A. (2003). Does Job Standardization Increase Job Burnout? *International Journal of Manpower* 24(5), pp.590–614.
- Jaca, N. (2018). *Investigating experiences of transition from a teacher to the head of department*. Unpublished doctorate thesis. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Jarbandhan, D.B. & Schutte, D. (2006). Using the survey procedure and interview data collection techniques. *Journal for Public Administration*, 41(3.1): 669-681.

- Javerntie-Thesleff, R., and Tienari, J., (2016). Roles as Mediators in Identity Work. *Organization Studies*, 37(2), pp. 237– 265
- Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2014). *Educational Research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2017). *Educational Research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1978). *The social psychology of organizations* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Katz, R. L. (1955). Skills of an effective administrator. *Harvard Business Review*, 33(1), 33-42
- Komives, S. R., Owen, J. E., Longerbeam, S. D., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2005). Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(6), 593-611
- Kotter, J. P. (2012) *Leading Change*. Harvard Business Review Press
- Korstjens, A. & Moser. I. (2017). Series: Practical Guidance to research. Part 1: Introduction. *European Journal of General Practice*, 23(1), pp.271-273.
- Kralik, Visentin & Van Loon, (2006). *Transition: a literature review*, 55 (3): 273-402
- Kreiter, R. & Kinicki, A. (2001). *Organizational Behavior*. (10<sup>th</sup> Edition). McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.
- Kumar, R. (2018). *Research Methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). London: SAGE.
- Li, W., Liping, P. & Khan, Q. (2018). *Research methods in education*. London: SAGE.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, EG. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lumadi, M.W. The logic of sampling. In Okeke, C. & Van Wyk, M. (2015). *Educational research: An African perspective*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

- Lune, H. & Berg, B.L. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (9<sup>th</sup> Edition). London: Pearson.
- Mann, F. C. (1965). Toward an understanding of the leadership role in formal organizations.
- Manning, T. (2002). *Discovering the essence of leadership*. New Holland Publishing Company
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th Edition). London: SAGE.
- Matshabaphala, M.D.J. (2017). The ethical intelligence imperative in Public Administration research. *Journal of Public Administration*, 52(1.1): 296-303.
- Mayer, R. H. & Zepeda. S. J. (2002). High school department chairs: Role ambiguity and conflicting change, *NASSP Bulletin*, 86(632): 49-46.
- McCall, G. J. & Simmons, J.L. (1978). *Identities and interactions: An examination of human associations in everyday life*. New York: Macmillan.
- Miles, R.H. & Perreault, W.D. Jr. (1976). Organizational role conflict: its antecedents and consequences. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 17, 19-44.
- Monette, D.R., Sullivan, T.J. & De Long, C.R. (2005). *Applied social research as a tool for the human services* (6th Edition). Australia: Thomson Books.
- Morse, J.M. Barrett, M. Mayan, M. Olson, K. & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1 (2), pp.240-252.
- Murphy, K. (2011). The complexity of pastoral care middle leadership in New Zealand secondary schools, Masters' dissertation, Unitec Institute of Technology.
- Murphy, S. E., & Johnson, S. K. (2011). The benefits of a long-lens approach to leader development: Understanding the seeds of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 459–470
- Nardi, P.M. (2018). *Doing survey research: A guide to quantitative methods*. London: Routledge.

- Neuman, W.L. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and quantitative Approaches* (8<sup>th</sup> Edition). Pearson: England United Kingdom.
- Nguyen, T. L. H. (2012). Identifying the training needs of Heads of Department in a newly established university in Vietnam. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 34(3): 309-321.
- Nieuwenhuis, F. J. (2010). *Managing values, human rights and democracy in education*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Nieuwenhuizen, C. & Nieman, G. (2019). *The nature and development of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship: A South African perspective* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition). Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Noor, N.M. (2004). Work-Family Conflict, Work and Family-Role Salience, and Women's Well-Being. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 144 (4): 389-406.
- Paese, M. & Mitchell, S. (2006). *Leaders in Transition: Stepping up, not off*, DDI Pennsylvania.
- Patten, M.L. & Newhart, M. (2018). *Understanding research: An overview of the essentials* (10<sup>th</sup> Edition). New York: Routledge.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. California: Sage.
- Pegg, M. (1994). *Positive Leadership: How to build a winning team*. Lifeskills International Ltd.
- Plakhotnik, M. S. & Rocco, T. S. (2010). Challenges of first-time managers: Implications for workplace learning. In S. M. Brigham & D. Plumb (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education*. Montreal, Quebec.
- Polit, D.F. & Beck, C.T. (2018). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer.
- Potts, H. (2016). *What Every Leader Needs To Know To Thrive In A New Role: Leader to Leader*, 2016 (82): 23-29.

- Riccucci, N. (2010). *Public administration: Traditions of inquiry and philosophies of knowledge*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press
- Salkind, N. J. (2019). *Exploring research*. London: Pearson.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students* (Eds.). London: Pitman Publishing
- Schein, E.H. (2009). Corporate Culture Survival Guide. *The Business & Economics*.
- Schlossberg, N. K. (2011). The challenge of change: the transition model and its applications. *Journal of Employment Counselling*, 48: 159-162.
- Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative Research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, pp.63-75.
- Sirkis, J. E. (2011). Development of leadership skills in community college department chairs. *Community College Enterprise*, 17(2): 46-61.
- Sluss, D. M., & Ashforth, B. E. 2007. Relational identity and identification: Defining ourselves through work relationships. *Academy of Management Review*, 32: 9 – 32.
- Smit, P.J., Cronje, G.J., Brevis, T. & Vrba, M.J. (2013). *Management principles: A contemporary edition for Africa*. (5th Edition). Cape Town: Juta.
- Stets, J., & Burke, P. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(3), 224-237.
- Struwig, F.W. & Stead, G.B. (2015). *Research: Planning, designing and reporting*. Cape Town: Pearson.
- Strydom & Bezuidenhout, (2014). Qualitative data collection methods. *Research matters*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Stryker, S. & Burke, P.J. (2000). The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63 (4): 284-297.
- Thach, E.C. & Thompson, K.J. (2006). A fresh look at followership: A model for matching followership and leadership styles

- Tschohl, J. (2014). *Effective Leadership vs. Management Build leaders by helping managers develop their leadership*. USA.
- Tubin, D. (2017). Leadership identity construction practices. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 45(5), 790-805.
- Van Wyk, M. (2015). Afrocentricity as a research philosophy. In Okeke, C. & Van Wyk, M. *Educational research: An African perspective*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
- Vrazel, J. (2013). *Managing change and leading through transitions: A guide for community and health practitioners*. Spring: Leverage Points Consulting.
- Weatherby, G. (1999). *Leadership vs Management: Management Review*, American Management Association, USA.
- Weindling, D. & Dimmock, C. (2006). Sitting in the “hot seat”: New head teachers in the UK. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 44(4): 326 – 340.
- Wild, J. & Diggins, C. (2015). *Marketing research (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in Organizations (8<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Zaccaro, S. J. (2001). *The nature of executive leadership*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Zepeda, S. J. & Kruskamp, B. (2007). Perspectives on instructional supervision. *The high school Journal*, 90(4), 44-54.
- Zhou, Y., Zeng, W., Hu, Y., Xi, Y., and Tan, L., (2014). The Relationship among Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity, Role Overload and Job Stress of Chinese Middle-Level Cadres. *Chinese Studies*, 3(1):8-11.

# APPENDIX 1: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Human Ethics sub-committee  
Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee  
PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa  
t: +27 (0) 46 603 8066  
f: +27 (0) 46 603 8822  
e: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za  
[www.ru.ac.za/research/research/ethics](http://www.ru.ac.za/research/research/ethics)  
NHREC Registration no. REC-241114-045

8 May 2020

Nxolo Mbokoma

Email: [g15tr9218@campus.ru.ac.za](mailto:g15tr9218@campus.ru.ac.za)

Review Reference: 2020-1082-3441

Dear Mr. Rafferty

**Title:** How the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity.

Principal Investigator: Mr Kevin Rafferty

Collaborators: Mrs Nxolo Mbokoma,

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC) – Human Ethics (HE) sub-committee.

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloging number allocated.

Sincerely,

Prof Arthur Webb

Chair: Human Ethics Sub-Committee, RUESC- HE

## APPENDIX 2: GATE KEEPER PERMISSION LETTER



April 29, 2020

Departmental Research Committee  
Rhodes University  
Grahamstown  
Eastern Cape  
South Africa

Dear Sir(s) or Madam

It is my understanding that Ms. Noxolo Patricia Mbokoma will be conducting a research study at Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency on "How the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity". Ms. Mbokoma (the Student) has informed me of the design of the study as well as the targeted population.

I support this effort and will provide any assistance necessary for the successful implementation of this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call. I can be reached at (043 703 6300) (office number).

Sincerely,

Mr. n. dladla  
Chief Executive Officer  
Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency

**Umqwaka efuziweyo:  
ukawuka-waka**

ICODI: ICARDI Ni Lulama Fane (Chairperson), Mr Ngwenkwe Ncwadi (Deputy Chairperson), Adv Phumle Mnyazi, Mr Sibusiso Mkhomo, Mr Mnyaweli Mooki, Ms Nontobeko Mkhata, Ms Zwickiko Tsembe, Mr Sindi Feki, Ms Nomakungo Petula Ngcanga, Amb Mzuveke Mqotsaka, Mr n dladla (CEO)


HEAD OFFICE 14 St Helena Rd, Infirmary Place, Beacon Bay, East London, 5205 • T: +27(0)43 702 6300, F: +27(0)43 273 5417, E: info@ecrda.gov.za  
Postnet Suite 385, Private Bag X9363, East London, 5200 • **AMATHOLE REGION** 125 Alexandra Rd, King William's Town, 5600 • T: +27(0)43 604 7000  
P: +27(0)43 642 5824 • PO Box 495, King William's Town, 5600 • **DE ENKESITHOLEN** 52 SPRIGG STREET, MTNATHA, 5099 • T: +27(0)47 531 2266,  
C: +27(0)82 850 3245 • **KARROO REGION** 24 Hospital Street, Cradock, 5880 • T: 048 681 9177, C: 073 316 5492 • [WWW.ECRDA.GOV.ZA](http://WWW.ECRDA.GOV.ZA)

## APPENDIX 3: INSTITUTION CONSENT FORM

### Institution Consent Form

How the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity

<b>Participation Consent</b>
I consent for you to approach employees 1. Mrs Ntombodidi Siswana 2. Mr Zingisa Somlotha 3. Mr Dumisani Makubalo 4. Ms Suzette Nienaber 5. Mr Navy Simukonda 6. Mr Mzimkhulu Zenzile to participate in the research on "How the leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity".
<b>I acknowledge and understand:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the institution is voluntary.</li> <li>• I may decide to withdraw the institution's participation at any time without penalty.</li> <li>• Employees 1. Mrs Ntombodidi Siswana 2. Mr Zingisa Somlotha 3. Mr Dumisani Makubalo 4. Ms Suzette Nienaber 5. Mr Navy Simukonda 6. Mr Mzimkhulu Zenzile will be invited to participate and that permission will be sought from them too.</li> <li>• Only employees who consent will participate in the project.</li> <li>• All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.</li> <li>• The employees' names will not be used and individual employees will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.</li> <li>• The institution will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.</li> <li>• Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.</li> <li>• A report of the findings will be made available to the institution.</li> <li>• I may seek further information on the project from Nokolo Patricia Mbokoma on 082 564 2692/068 282 3631.</li> </ul>

<b>Full Name:</b>	Mr Nhlanganiso Dladla
<b>Position:</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	12 May 2020

<b>Please return to:</b>	<a href="mailto:nokolo.mbokoma@gmail.com">nokolo.mbokoma@gmail.com</a> and <a href="mailto:gt5m821@campus.ru.ac.za">gt5m821@campus.ru.ac.za</a>
--------------------------	---

## **APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **RHODES UNIVERSITY RHODES BUSINESS SCHOOL**

MASTERS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH PROJECT

RESEARCHER: Noxolo Patricia Mbokoma (0825642692)

SUPERVISOR: Kevin Rafferty

**TOPIC:** How the Leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity

Dear Participant.

I am a Master of Business Administration (MBA) Student at Rhodes University. Currently I am collecting primary data as the component of my study.

My topic is entitled “How the Leaders of an Eastern Cape Development Agency experienced a transition from specialist roles to the leadership roles and how this shaped their leadership identity”.

In order to complete this project, the latter part of this project involves face to face interviews with a sample of respondents on the same subject. The information you provide will help the researcher to establish how the participants experienced the transition and how it shaped their leadership identity.

You are requested to participate in focus group discussion frankly and honestly. Your response will be kept strictly confidential.

The interviews should take you only 30-45 minutes and there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. I greatly appreciate the help of your organization and yourself in furthering this research study.

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

The company has had people that moved from non-managerial to managerial positions. The study is conducted targeting participants that moved from non-managerial position to a managerial position in the past 3 to 10 years.

Given this background, explain the following: -

### **Section A: Biographical Data**

1. Gender of the participant-----  
----
2. Age of the participant-----  
---
3. What is your highest qualification-----  
-
4. For how many years have you been in this leadership position-----  
---
5. How many direct reports do you have-----  
--

### **Section B: Transition from specialist role to the leadership role**

This section is broken down into nine propositions, which are transition process, organizational structure, workload and skills, identity, financial status, change management, challenges, support system, and career development.

#### **1. Transition Process**

- (i) How did you experience the transition from specialist role to the leadership role?
- (ii) What do you think is the ideal process of initiating and implementing a transition in an organization?
- (iii) How would you describe a successful transition process in the context of this agency?

## **2. Identity**

- (i) Describe yourself in the old role and the new role?
- (ii) How do your peers perceive you in your new position as compared to your previous role position?
- (iii) How did you cope with the changes and expectations associated with the transition?
- (iv) How did you let go of old realities? How did you identify yourself within the organization and within yourself prior to the transition? How do you identify yourself now in the leader role?
- (v) How do you describe your readiness for the new position?
- (vi) If there was a provision for the reversal of the transition decision, would you support it? Why would you support or not support it?

## **3. Workload & Skills**

- (i) What were you doing as a specialist based on your skills (function), which differs from your new position as a leader?
- (ii) Describe how the new workload and roles match with your skill and capacity?
- (iii) How did you manage to shift from previous workload to the expected new skills?
- (iv) How do you compare the new skills to the previous ones? How do you feel about your competency to fulfil the new role?

## **4. Organization Structure**

- (i) Why was the transition necessary for this agency?
- (ii) How were the expected role players involved in decision making in this transition?

- (iii) How did the transition affect the organogram of the agency?
- (iv) How did this (above) affect your career development?
- (v) How has the transition addressed the organizational needs that led to the initiation and implementation of the transition?
- (vi) How is the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency leadership and reporting chain after the transition?

## **5. Change Management**

- (i) What were the main changes that you have experienced as a leader during the transition process from a specialist role to a leadership role?
- (ii) How did the change sharpen your leadership identity?
- (iii) How did the agency manage resistance to change if any, before, during and after the transition period?
- (iv) How did the agency leadership address the conflicts arising from roles, and role confusion after the transition?
- (v) If you were going to go through a similar transition, what would you recommend in order to make for a smoother transition? How would you ensure this took place?

## **6. Challenges**

- (i) What challenges did you experience as a result of transition?
- (ii) How did you overcome these challenges? Who assisted you in the transition? How did they assist you?
- (iii) What assistance would have helped you to make the transition and overcome the challenges?
- (iv) What organizational challenges did the agency encounter during, and after the transition?
- (v) Describe how these challenges were addressed.

## **7. Financial Status**

- (i) How did the transition affect the financial efficiency of the agency?
- (ii) How did the transition affect your financial status from the old to the new leadership role position?

**8. Support System**

- (i) How are you supported in your new position?
- (ii) What factors made your transition easier? Who provided this assistance? How did they do it?
- (iii) How does the agency communicate the opportunities for support for the new positions?
- (iv) How would you describe the nature of support you receive in relation to the needs to the organization?
- (v) What do you think the organizational leadership should be doing to support leaders during their transition process to the leadership role?

**9. Career Progress**

- (i) What motivated you the most to desire a transition from specialist role to leadership role?
- (ii) How do you think this would improve your career development?
- (iii) Did the organizations promote you based on your technical skills or on your management skills?

*Thank you for taking your precious time to be part of the discussions.*